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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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Let us generate the motivation of bodhicitta.

We should cultivate this thought of aspiring for full enlightenment for the sake of all beings. It is for the purpose of achieving full enlightenment that we listen to this profound teaching on lam rim, and generate the strong intention to practise it afterwards.

In previous weeks we covered the topic of morality by focusing upon both the benefits of practising morality and the disadvantages of not doing so. The next subject is the four doors of moral downfall.

## The Four Doors of Moral Downfall

In order to ensure that we can sustain the practice of morality, we not only need to know the doors of moral downfall, but we must also know how to close those doors, and in this way protect our moral practice.

### 1. First Door of Moral Downfall:

#### Lack of Knowledge

To practise morality we need to avoid certain actions, while adopting others, so therefore we require some knowledge or discrimination of what is virtuous, and what is non-virtuous. If we lack this discrimination, then the result will be the accumulation of a pile of negative actions and karma in our mind.

It is like understanding what is needed to keep a house and its outer environment very clean and tidy. To do this you must know which things are truly useful and necessary and which are not, and on the basis of this knowledge, you keep the useful and discard the rest. In this way there will be fewer things in the house and so it will be easier to keep it tidy, clean and manageable. Without this knowledge, we think that each and every object might be useful one day. So we keep them, and if we cannot bear to discard anything, then gradually the whole house will become full of rubbish. Eventually the house will have more rubbish than the outer environment!

Likewise you need to understand that to keep the inner environment of the mind clean and peaceful, an important condition is to get rid of the negativities or actions that need to be avoided. To do that we need to know which actions need to be avoided, and then we can avoid them, and we need to know the actions that need to be adopted and then we can adopt them. It is like keeping your outer environment neat and tidy. Doing that not only contributes to the happiness in your own mind, but also contributes to the happiness of those who come to visit. If the cleanliness of the outer environment can have such an effect on both our own mind, and the minds of others, then there is no need to mention the

effect upon our mind and our life, if the inner world of our mind is kept very clean.

If, for example, we wish to keep the morality of refraining from the ten non-virtuous actions, we must firstly recognise each of the ten non-virtues which need to be abandoned. For example, to fully recognise the non-virtue of killing we must understand its components. Before you can actually kill, you must have the intention to do so. So to refrain from killing you must refrain from the thought of killing, as well as the actual action of killing. So by recognising this non-virtuous action of killing very clearly, you see the need to generate the motivation to refrain from even the thought of killing, let alone refraining from putting that thought into action. In short, to abandon any non-virtuous action you must first recognise that action very clearly. Otherwise out of ignorance you might commit that action.

### 2. Second Door of Moral Downfall:

#### Lack of Respect

This door relates to the importance of having respect for the Buddha, the Buddha's teachings, the followers of Buddhism and even towards one's own spiritual practice. If you possess a vow of self liberation, or bodhisattva vows, or tantric vows, or any spiritual quality such as good heart you need to cherish such qualities as very valuable and precious. With respect we can prevent many negative actions. For example we have respect for our parents because of their kindness at all stages of our life - from the beginning at birth, through childhood, and then to the later stages of life. This respect will inspire us to avoid using abusive words to them, and thus prevent any negative actions towards them.

If we recollect the qualities of Lord Buddha, especially his teachings, and so cultivate faith and respect for both the Buddha and his teachings, then this can also encourage us to show the same respect to the followers of Buddhism, and to our spiritual friends. In this way we can also realise how the spiritual qualities we have cultivated within us are so precious - like a wish fulfilling jewel. Through such a feeling of respect we can then experience some sense of peace and harmony in our mind.

It is said that:

- the three objects of refuge, or the three jewels, are the objects of our respect and faith since they are the special field of faith
  - one's parents are the special field of respect and
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gratitude

- sentient beings are the special field of suffering.

For these reasons, we should try to see why we have to feel respect towards enlightened beings, spiritual friends, the teachings of Buddha and towards our own spiritual qualities. This has the benefit of bringing peace to our mind, and bringing harmony to our relationships with others.

In particular we must think of the benefit of the spiritual practice, or training, which we ourselves are undergoing. We should think that this spiritual training, is the true teacher, and that it truly represents the Lord Buddha. It can satisfy all that we desire and wish, as well as expelling all that we do not want. This training is the everlasting source of happiness in this life. No matter what action you do - resting, walking, sitting, or whoever one accompanies - as long as this spiritual practice is safeguarded and sustained, then you will have happiness, joy, and peace. Even in the future, following this spiritual practice will lead you in the right direction in all future lifetimes. So it is very beneficial to relate or associate all our spiritual knowledge and practice towards our own mind - our own mental or inner continuum.

Whatever we learn about in the spiritual teachings must be practiced. Our spiritual knowledge must be applied to calming our mind. Because the mind always accompanies us, whether we are happy or not, is all mainly determined by this constant companion - the mind. So if we apply these spiritual teachings to our mind, then our mind will find calm and thereby happiness.

We should not behave like a monkey when it engages in warfare with a bird. When the bird flies up high in the sky, the monkey runs here and there to show that it is very brave. But, as the bird comes closer to the ground, the monkey loses its courage and becomes more timid. As the bird comes even closer the monkey covers both its eyes with its hands, and may even urinate with fear. In spiritual practice we should not be like the monkey and be unable to apply the spiritual teachings when hardships confront us - forgetting our practice when a problem falls upon us. At all times we should be mentally courageous and brave, and strongly motivated to practise dharma.

### **3. Third Door Of Moral Downfall: Too Much Delusion**

It is very obvious that if we have a strong forceful delusion, such as desire, then any vows that we have taken may deteriorate, and this can damage other spiritual commitments. We can see then, that it is very obvious that delusions can influence us to commit many negative actions. When overpowered by delusions even someone who has a very good natured mind can appear as a evil person. It is as though the delusions cover all their good qualities. Under the influence of delusions we do many non-virtuous actions instead of continuing with virtuous ones.

So, we must know the best way to challenge and counter delusions. Generally, the most intense delusions are challenged first - that is the one which has most the immediate influence. To give an example, there may be

a very vicious, large dog in the far distance, and a very vicious small dog beside you. If you are so worried about the big dog biting you that you ignore the small dog, then of course the small dog will bite you first! So it is best to run away from the small dog first.

Although the main target is counteracting the very influential or root delusions, at the same time you must defend yourself from the more minor, or lesser forms of delusions. In other words whilst we are launching an offensive at delusions, at the same time we are being defensive. Otherwise you will have no success. Do not think that some delusions are so minor and small that they can be neglected, or think that they can do no harm to one's spiritual practice.

Therefore we should try to overcome any delusion no matter how small and minor it is, and we should remain very alert and mindful of all forms of delusion. Depending upon the types of delusion there are specific remedies that can be applied.

The delusions and their remedies are:

Desire	meditate on the ugliness, or negative side, of an object of desire
Hatred	meditate on loving kindness
Pride	meditate on <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the suffering of sickness, old age and death</li><li>• the uncertainty of friends and enemies in terms of how quickly they change</li><li>• the uncertainty of how quickly one's status changes from high to low, how even some people in a very high position can in a short time go to gaol</li><li>• uncertainty in terms of wealth - how rich people become poor</li></ul>
Ignorance	meditate upon the reality of the dependent arising of all things

These are the specific remedies to delusions, whereas meditation on emptiness is the remedy to any type of delusion.

### **4. Fourth Door of Moral Downfall: Lack of Conscientiousness**

This will be covered next week.

Geshe Doga says that he was very pleased with the exam answers. You have all done very well. Looking at your answers it seems that the students will reach enlightenment before the teacher. Anyhow Geshela was very happy that almost all of you did the test. He thinks that, generally, in any organisation you join, you should follow or fulfil all the rules of that organisation. So whatever you choose to do, you should stick with the discipline as this will be most fruitful, and give most satisfaction to your mind.

The meaning of offering:

Offering = Chod pa (Tib)= Puja(Sanskrit) which means to please. So, if you please someone then you are making offering.