

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅུངས།



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Everyone should make sure that they cultivate the bodhicitta motivation by thinking that we are receiving these teachings on the lam rim to achieve full enlightenment for the sake of all beings, and for the same purpose generate the thought of putting these teachings into practice.

Controlling our own mind is the most beneficial dharma practice that we can do, it is a reflection of the essence of all the dharma teachings. Materially, we have no shortages to sustain the body, so there are no better conditions than we already have to practise dharma. Making the most benefit of those conditions means to practise the dharma so as to control and calm our own mind.

To further inspire and motivate us we should see the benefits of dharma in controlling the mind, and in being mentally and physically at rest. If your mind is calm and at rest through meditation and dharma practice you are at peace. Whereas if your mind is uncontrolled and delusions enter it, you will experience many problems and unnecessary difficulties in life.

The most essential spiritual practice we undertake is counteracting delusions. No matter what else we do, even if we are physically isolated there will not be much benefit in spiritual practice if at the same time, our mind is not isolated from the influence of thoughts concerning the affairs of this life, or future lives, or of the self-centred mind. We cannot achieve anything from our practice with a mind that is not free of troubling thoughts. Realising that the goal of spiritual practice is to remedy delusions, the most intense or forceful delusion should be attacked first, then the lesser forms of delusion can be tackled. As we make progress by decreasing our delusions, we can truly find joy in our practice. It will be personally rewarding in the sense that we shall possess more virtue and shall have developed our mental concentration.

The teachings always emphasise that we should see the dharma or the spiritual teachings as our mind's best and most reliable companion. All mental unhappiness is the result of keeping bad mental company with delusions. From this point of view, we have to understand that the reason we engage in any dharma practice is to remove delusions from the mind.

422.313 Third Benefit of Bodhicitta: Outshining the Qualities of Hearers and Solitary Realisers by Virtue of Race

ཉན་རང་རིགས་གྱི་སློན་ལ་ཟེའ་གྱིས་འོན་པ།

The third benefit of bodhicitta is to outshine the qualities of hearers and solitary realisers by virtue of the mahayana race or nature.

We may have doubts about contemplating the benefits of bodhicitta because we might think that we have not yet generated actual bodhicitta. However if we have not actually fully generated bodhicitta, but have a thorough understanding of what it is, then we can theoretically understand the benefits of bodhicitta, and then go on to develop it.

When thinking of benefits of bodhicitta in terms of our own practice we must first know the essence of the bodhicitta mind. It is the genuine thought of benefiting or helping other sentient beings. It is said that the root cause of bodhicitta is compassion. We may not possess actual bodhicitta, but we all do have the main cause of bodhicitta mind, which is this love and compassion for other beings, even though it is very partial and not perfect. So in thinking about and studying the benefits of bodhicitta, we can relate these benefits to the love and compassion which already exists in our mind. We have to understand that this love and compassion within us means that we are closer to developing the bodhicitta mind.

We might feel some inspiration to generate bodhicitta after knowing all its benefits. Then we should ask ourselves what we can do to generate this bodhicitta, knowing that its root cause is the compassion which already exists within our minds. What needs to be done is to make that compassion perfect, by making it impartial and extending it to all beings without any discrimination. If we make an effort to cultivate such impartial compassion then, as said in the text, we accumulate a large store of merit, equal to the number of sentient beings. In this way our practice leaves a very special mahayana seed to produce the bodhicitta mind.

How Bodhicitta Outshines by Race

In regard to the benefit of outshining hearers and solitary realisers, one sutra says “It is like how the jewels which come from the ocean can outshine all the other ordinary jewels in the world”.

Another sutra says “From the very moment that a son is born to the king he will outshine all the senior ministers of the king”.

Even at a very young age, a child born to a king just by virtue of being born to the race of a king, will be superior to and outshine even the king’s senior ministers.

The qualities of hearers and solitary realisers are very great. The hearer who has achieved liberation has completely abandoned mental delusion, yet someone who has developed bodhicitta mind can outshine that hearer. This is because the bodhicitta mind is the buddha’s nature or buddha’s race. Therefore, because of this superior race, a person who has developed bodhicitta outshines all hearers and solitary realisers.

On another level is the analogy of the king’s child, who even though young and lacking knowledge still outshines by virtue of race. However as the child becomes older it will master all the necessary skills and knowledge, and thus outshine all ministers by way of knowledge, as well as by way of race. ‘Outshining hearers and solitary realisers by way of race’ refers to conventional bodhicitta. Whereas, ‘outshining by way of ultimate bodhicitta’ is like the king’s child outshining all the ministers, by virtue of having gained all necessary knowledge in addition to race.

It is also said that bodhicitta is the essence of all the 84,000 bundles of Buddha’s teachings. One instruction Atisha constantly gave to his students was to renounce the world, and to meditate on love and compassion to generate bodhicitta

422.314 The Fourth Benefit: An Excellent Object of Veneration

མཚོན་པའི་ཞིང་མཚོན་གྱི་འགྲུར་བ།

Becoming an excellent or supreme object of veneration means that anyone who has generated bodhicitta is a worthy object of respect and veneration. When we make offerings we visualise an assembly of holy objects in our mind. However, if through your own effort you generate bodhicitta mind, you are also worthy of being included in the assembly of holy objects of offerings and prostrations.

We should understand that it takes a great deal of time and effort to produce bodhicitta. Even Atisha spent twelve years in meditation in order to do so. As mentioned in the commentary, it is good to read stories of such great masters and their main practice in order to be inspired. It is said that it is more beneficial and worthwhile if we put the same effort into generating bodhicitta, as in chanting mantras and visualising deities.

So we have to always remember the benefits of bodhicitta mind so as to sustain our motivation, and constantly make an effort towards producing that bodhicitta mind. The result, it is said, will be to deposit some seed or impression of bodhicitta in our mind. Although we may feel that producing impartial love and compassion is remote, by making continuous effort our current imperfect love and compassion will one day become impartial love and compassion.

The high godly beings such as Brahma or Indra also pay respect to one who has generated bodhicitta, giving all their support, and becoming a friend. Physically, by virtue of having generated bodhicitta one becomes magnificent and glorified. It is said that paying homage to bodhisattvas is equivalent to paying homage to the buddhas. It is like paying homage to the waxing moon. This analogy means that paying homage to the waxing moon at the beginning of the month is equivalent to paying homage to all the full moons to come. Likewise, paying homage to bodhisattvas is like paying homage to the buddhas, since it is said that the buddhas are born from bodhisattvas, and the bodhisattvas are born from bodhicitta¹. Even the buddhas pay homage to bodhisattvas. So here we also are learning about the causes to become a buddha, and the main cause is producing a bodhicitta mind.

We talk of the bodhisattva’s practice. Initially they generate bodhicitta mind, and then they engage in the bodhisattva’s deeds of which there are two sets:

1. Primarily to ripen their own continuum by means of the six perfections. These are generosity, morality, patience, joyous effort, concentration, and wisdom
2. Primarily to ripen the continuum of other beings by the four means of gathering disciples.
 - i. Giving. People always like to be given gifts. Even if someone is angry with you, if you give them gifts they will lose their anger.
 - ii. Speak kind words. When people become closer to you, speak nicely using pleasant, skilful speech. This mainly refers to the type of speech which people regard as pleasant, good speech.
 - iii. Teaching dharma to suit the needs or interests of the person. This also means that the manner in which you give dharma must also be both verbally and physically pleasant.
 - iv. Putting into practice what you teach to others. This means that by showing an example not only are you teaching dharma, but it becomes clear to their mind that they have to put into practice what they have learnt.

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

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Note on authentication

The original typescript is prepared by Jenny Molloy from Alan Molloy’s original transcript, which has been checked against Damien Busby’s notes. Adair Bunnett then checks the typescript against a tape recording, and edits the text, which is finally checked by Alan Molloy.

¹ Editor: Chandrakirti *Madhyamika Avatara* “Buddhas are born from bodhisattvas. The mind of compassion, non dual understanding and the altruistic intention to full enlightenment are the causes for children of the conquerors.”