

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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Make sure that you cultivate the bodhicitta mind as your motivation for listening to these teachings on the stages of the path to enlightenment, or the lam rim. Generate the bodhicitta thought, which is that you are listening to these teachings to gain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

We have been going over the benefits of cultivating bodhicitta. At the moment we are just assuming that we have actually produced this bodhicitta in our mind when we generate bodhicitta as our motivation. However we have not produced actual bodhicitta. The benefits of the bodhicitta mind which we are studying refers to the benefits of generating actual bodhicitta. The purpose of learning these benefits is to inspire us to cultivate this bodhicitta mind. By focusing on our motivation before we undertake an action is to understand the reasons for which we undertake that action. Even with non-spiritual matters, it is important to cultivate a strong thought of doing that action before we commence a task, so that our aim for completing the action becomes clearer.

422.315 You Amass an Enormous Collection of Merit with Ease

ཚོགས་རྒྱ་ཚོན་པོ་བདེ་སྤྲུག་ཏུ་རྫོགས་པ།

Of the ten benefits of bodhicitta we are now up to the fifth benefit: amassing enormous merit with ease.

Regarding this Geshe Nyurgumpa said, “When bodhicitta is generated then it accumulates merit by itself, it purifies all obscurations by itself, and removes all obstacles.” So there are tremendous benefits in generating bodhicitta.

As discussed in the past, bodhicitta practice means perfecting the love and compassion that we feel towards others. We can do this by thinking of the degree of love and kind feeling that we have towards other beings, and fully develop this thought. For us, making progress in this bodhicitta practice means making these feelings of love and compassion unbiased, and trying to remove the influence of the attachment and hatred that overlays them. These feelings of love and compassion are the seeds of actual bodhicitta. If we focus on these qualities and try to develop them, then actual bodhicitta will arise naturally out of them.

What do we understand when it says that bodhicitta will automatically accumulate merit, automatically purify all our obscurations, and automatically remove all obstacles? This benefit of bodhicitta applies from the point of view of our own practice, and even from a beginner’s perspective. Merit is accumulated by engaging in very

beneficial deeds such as generosity, observing moral ethics, and practising patience or tolerance. These practices boost our merit. What is the driving force leading us to undertake such meritorious action? It is the thought of benefiting other beings, which is basically the meaning of love and compassion.

On the other hand if we think of love, compassion and bodhicitta as a genuine thought of extending benefit to other beings, then naturally we have genuine thoughts of giving, and not having any harmful thoughts towards others. So our actions become very moral and we bring moral ethics into our actions. Likewise if we feel love and compassion towards others, we shall be more patient and tolerant. So our merit increases.

Bodhicitta is also said to be a means of purifying our obscurations. This is similar to accumulating merit. That is, out of the thought of benefiting other beings if we engage in the practice of generosity, we eliminate obscurations such as miserliness. By engaging in moral ethics we purify all the obscurations of immoral actions, and likewise through the practice of patience we overcome the obscuration of anger towards other beings.

Once this bodhicitta is cultivated then all our actions become a source of accumulating merit, and a means of removing even the obscurations preventing the development of single pointed concentration and wisdom. We can all naturally develop this concentration and wisdom because of having laid good foundations with practices such as generosity, ethics and so forth.

Bodhicitta is also said to remove all obstacles. It is even said in a sutra “A person with fortunate merit will obtain all that is desired”. To elaborate, this means that if our merit and fortune are enhanced, we shall not face any form of obstacle.

Lama Tsong Khapa said that bodhicitta is like an alchemic water for accumulating the two types of accumulation of merit.¹ The two types of accumulation refer to the accumulation of merit, and the accumulation of wisdom. Just as alchemic water can transform any metal into gold, so bodhicitta will make all our actions part of these two accumulations of merit and wisdom.

[Lama Tsong Khapa also states that] bodhicitta is also

¹ Lama Tsong Khapa “Concise meaning of the stages of the path”

“Producing bodhi mind is the king post of the mahayana path,

The base and support of bodhisattva’s great deeds

A philosopher’s stone (ie alchemic liquid) transmuting all into merit and wisdom

A treasure of merit assembling glorious virtue.”

like a “treasure of gold of where all the virtues are gathered.”²

Achieving the state of buddhahood depends upon the full accumulation of merit and wisdom. The accumulation of merit is regarded as the method to reach buddhahood, whereas the accumulation of wisdom is regarded as the knowledge to do so. When one reaches the final state of complete buddhahood, the end result of the accumulation of merit manifests as the buddha’s physical or form body. Whereas the completion of the accumulation of wisdom is manifested as the truth body of the buddha, which is the omniscient or all-knowing exalted wisdom mind of the buddha. This is the brief meaning of the two accumulations.

In terms of these categories of the two accumulations of merit or wisdom, the six perfections can be divided as follows:

- The first three - generosity, morality, and patience - belong to the category of creating merit.
- The last two - concentration and wisdom - belong to the category of wisdom
- The perfection of joyous effort belongs to both categories, being part of both the accumulation of merit and of wisdom.

What follows next is the benefits of bodhicitta in terms of our virtue becoming inexhaustible and continuously increasing. In the commentary there are many quotations from Shantideva’s text *Bodhisattva’s Way Of Life* showing how once bodhicitta is generated, then even a very small action creates a huge and endless result.

Having studied the benefits and significance of bodhicitta you can now understand why it is important to try to apply this motivation of bodhicitta right at the beginning of any practice. You may not yet have generated actual bodhicitta, but you have at least learnt and understood what this mind is about, so, at least at this theoretical level, you can cultivate this bodhicitta mind. You do this by thinking at the beginning of any practice, that the reason why you are engaging in the practice is to remove the suffering of all living beings. Even if this is very fabricated, and not a completely genuine thought, still make some effort to produce the thought that through this practice may all living beings find happiness.

If we infuse our motivation with bodhicitta, then our actions will yield an inexhaustible result and benefit. Therefore try to remember bodhicitta at all times when engaging in any practice. Whether that practice be saying a mantra, or offering even a flower to the buddha, or making prostrations, or being generous, try to think that this practice is to benefit all beings, or to attain full enlightenment for the sake of all beings. Doing this shows that we are at least trying to follow the example of the bodhisattva’s deeds.

Regardless of the type of practice, the length of time, or the amount of effort we put into it, if we incorporate bodhicitta at the beginning, and during the practice, we should try to remind ourselves that we are doing this practice to attain enlightenment for the sake of all

sentient beings. Likewise, at the end, with this mind of bodhicitta we dedicate the practice so that all sentient beings will be free of all suffering, and find everlasting happiness. If on a regular basis we remember this bodhicitta motivation whenever we do a practice, then gradually we shall see ourselves making some progress; in terms of actually having a genuine feeling of love and compassion for others.

Bodhicitta will bring more peace and happiness within our own mind as well. What we are trying to develop is the thought of others, but when such a thought is generated in our own mind there is an immediate benefit in that one’s mind becomes calmer and more peaceful. This peace and happiness in the mind is what we cherish. In order to obtain that feeling each individual being must create its cause. It is not something which a higher being can grant to us as a gift. If it were there is no reason why Buddha couldn’t give us this gift. So cultivating bodhicitta also has this personal benefit of enhancing our own inner peace and happiness.

We can only be successful with this bodhicitta practice if we train ourself. We may find it difficult in the beginning because we are not accustomed to this unfamiliar practice. But, if we train the mind by trying to infuse this bodhicitta mind as our motivation, throughout all our actions - even sleeping, eating, and drinking - then such thought will arise naturally without depending upon a deliberate effort to generate the thought. So we should not feel very discouraged and abandon our efforts just because the practice we are doing appears to be very hard and unrealistic. We should remind ourselves of what Shantideva said, “There is nothing which cannot become easy by the force of becoming familiar with it.” So, in this way try to develop bodhicitta mind throughout all our actions.

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

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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.

² ibid