

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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Cultivate the bodhicitta motivation, which is genuinely wishing to attain the state of buddhahood in order to benefit all sentient beings. With this genuine wish for enlightenment for the sake of all beings, we listen to the teachings on the lam rim, or the stages of the path to enlightenment, with the strong intention of putting them into practice.

Fifth Benefit of Bodhicitta (cont)

Last week we discussed the fifth benefit of bodhicitta, quickly and easily gathering a huge amount of merit. We learnt that when bodhicitta is integrated into our spiritual practice, then that practice represents the deeds of a bodhisattva being, and is a cause to achieve buddhahood, or full enlightenment. Furthermore, the merit that we accumulate from that practice is as countless as the living beings throughout the universe.

It is said in Shantideva's text *The Bodhisattva's Way Of Life* that having generated bodhicitta, and having taken the bodhisattva vows, then your virtuous merit will increase continuously, and become as infinite as space. It will keep increasing even if you are doing nothing. Keeping all these benefits in mind, we should see how important it is to always incorporate bodhicitta into our practice.

From our own experience we can understand how bodhicitta gathers enormous merit. By observing our mental continuum, and discriminating between the various thoughts and states of mind that we generate, we can analyse which thoughts and states of minds are harmful, and which are beneficial. On the basis of such investigations, we can see how if we sustain this altruistic thought which cares for other beings, then automatically we create very wholesome deeds, bringing benefit to both our own life and the lives of others. We can also see that by generating this altruistic attitude of bodhicitta, our attitude to the world and ourself becomes very wide and broad. It also reduces all disturbing and worrying thoughts, bringing us a very stable inner peace.

The selfish mind and selfish actions, on the other hand, bring harm to both ourselves and others. The influence of that mind narrows our vision, and also paves the way for various disturbing and worrying thoughts to arise. Of course, if we perform an action with a selfish motive, then more often than not, that action will bring more harm to our life than benefit. In the short term, selfish deeds may appear to bring benefit, but in the long term they bring harm.

422.316: Sixth Benefit: Quickly Purifying all Negativities and Obscurations

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The sixth benefit means that if we generate bodhicitta, then all our negativities and mental obscurations can be quickly purified.

Firstly we must define the difference between negativities and obscuration.

Negativities are any actions which produce, or which are a cause to produce undesirable results, for instance the actions of killing, stealing, adultery, and so forth. All these non-virtuous or unwholesome actions are negativities.

An obscuration is something which obstructs one from reaching liberation from cyclic existence, or achieving the all-knowing state of buddhahood. Obscurations are generally of two types.

1. Obscuration to liberation.
2. Obscuration to the all-knowing state of buddhahood.

Obscuration means something which “obstructs”. Examples of obscurations to liberation are all the mental delusions, together with their seeds. They are called obscurations to liberation because they are mainly an obstruction to the achievement of liberation. Whereas the imprints left by all the mental delusions are obscurations to the all-knowing state of buddhahood. Another example of an obscuration to the all-knowing state of enlightenment is the appearance to the mind that things exist inherently or truly, which is a dualistic state of misconception.

It is said in Shantideva's text *The Bodhisattva's Way Of Life* that “Even in the instant when bodhicitta is generated, it can get rid of the negativities, even very sinful actions which have been committed in the past.” There is no more powerful practice than bodhicitta to purify negativities. This also implies that there are no negativities which cannot be purified by cultivating bodhicitta.

It is relevant to recall here the story of Asanga who spent twelve years in a cave meditating in order to see a vision of Maitreya buddha. Maitreya had been with Asanga throughout those twelve years in the cave, but due to his negativities Asanga could not see the object of his meditation. Having failed to see Maitreya, Asanga came out of the cave, and saw a female dog experiencing agonising suffering. The dog was lying on the dirt and

infested with maggots. Asanga wanted to remove the maggots without harming them, so he decided to do it with his tongue, and because of this strong compassion all his negativities were purified, and he immediately saw Maitreya buddha. After this Maitreya said to Asanga “If you do not believe that I was always with you, carry me into town on your back”. When Asanga did this, most people saw nothing on his back, except for some who saw him carrying a dog.

If it were not for our obscurations and negativities, there would be no reason for us not to see all the buddhas and bodhisattvas. There would also be no reason for us not to directly see the invited Tara when we do a Tara practice.

This practice of developing love and compassion for others is therefore most powerful, effective and helpful in purifying negativities. Therefore, in our daily practice we should place some emphasis on developing whatever degree of love and compassion that we all possess. For instance if we see others with sickness and suffering, try to understand their pain and suffering, and feel sympathy for them. As Geshe Chekawa always said “May I always be able to see other beings with eyes of love and compassion”. If we generate love and compassion towards even a few people, it effectively purifies negativities. If we extend this feeling to one hundred beings, not only do we purify any negativities we might have created towards those beings, but we also purify all other negativities stored in our mind.

The more we develop love and compassion towards others, the closer we are to giving rise to bodhicitta, and that means we are closer to reaching the state of buddhahood. So we should think of this practice of meditation on love and compassion as being something with which we are all familiar. In other words it doesn't require much learning. If we have accumulated many karmic crimes or negative actions, there is no reason to feel great fear or regret about this. Rather, we should think that if we focus our meditation on showing love and compassion to others, then all these negativities can be purified.

We should encourage ourselves by thinking that if we do not wish for the outcome of those negative actions that we have done in the past, then we have to purify these negativities, and the best means of purifying negativities is meditating on love and compassion. It is said that someone who has generated bodhicitta, or true love and compassion for others, is like the brave, fearless person who walks in unsafe areas of town. Like this, a person who has generated bodhicitta has no fear, because even if you have created negativities in the past, there is no reason to fear the outcome of those negative actions.

With an unbreakable stick, we can break a room full of clay tiles very quickly. If we want to purify all our negativities, then meditating on love and compassion is like that unbreakable stick. It has the power to purify all negativities in one instant: using other methods it might take one hundred years to purify them.

For the examination the compulsory question is to elaborate on the refuge prayer “I go for refuge to the

buddha, dharma, sangha until I achieve enlightenment”. This prayer also incorporates bodhicitta. Geshe-la wants us to study the three jewels or objects of refuge: buddha, dharma, and sangha. We use his refuge prayer all the time, so it is good to study it, and understand its meaning.

It is a very important prayer, as taking refuge in the three jewels is very significant. It shows that the path we have chosen is not perverted, misleading or wrong. Generating bodhicitta is also significant, since it shows that the path you have chosen is not perverted nor is it inferior.

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.