

# Study Group - "Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand"

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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ཅུ་ལམ་རིམ་རྣམས་གྲོལ་ལག་བཅུངས།



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Ensure that you have the correct motivation.

## 422.318 You will not receive any harm or hindrances

གཞོན་པ་དང་བར་ཆད་ཀྱིས་མི་ཚུགས་པ།

The eighth benefit of bodhicitta is that you will not receive any harm or any hindrances.

With a bodhicitta mind you always show kindness and love, rather than having any harmful thoughts towards other beings. Therefore you do not receive harm from non-human beings such as spirits, some of whom read minds, and see into the future. They can see that you have bodhicitta, and so they do not dare to harm you, because there is no reason to do so. With human beings, if our mind becomes abnormal or disordered we might want to cause harm to others. Usually however, we cannot bear to harm those who benefit, support, or show love to us.

As a benefit of bodhicitta we shall not face any spiritual hindrances which might prevent us from achieving our spiritual goal. Bodhicitta also frees us from hindrances in our life, such as those limiting our lifespan, or those hindrances we face in work, or any of the other tasks which we undertake. If we generate bodhicitta in our mind, we can overcome all these harms and hindrances.

There are stories in the text that explain more about this eighth benefit. Also remember how the Lord Buddha conquered the forces of evil through his deep single-pointed meditation on loving kindness for those other beings. This eighth benefit of bodhicitta shows us that when we face harms and hindrances in life, then we should meditate on loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta, in order to overcome and counter them.

Of course there are times when we find ourselves very mentally and emotionally disturbed, but without any specific reason or cause we can pinpoint. Some people actually believe that this is because some evil spirit is possessing them, and of course this is possible. However when we do undergo such internal disturbance, the best thing to do is to meditate, and realise that rather than focussing on worrying about oneself, this is the time to apply spiritual knowledge.

In these circumstances it would be very beneficial to cultivate compassion towards other beings: a compassion based upon a personal experience of pain and suffering and their effects. Then instead of focusing upon your own suffering, you reflect that other beings undergo far greater suffering than yours. So you say to yourself "By accepting and enduring this suffering which

I now undergo, may all sentient beings be free of suffering. May this suffering which I now undergo become a cause to free others from their suffering". Rather than letting this painful experience bother you continuously, you are doing something to overcome it.

Any unwanted problem in life can be so grave that if we do not do something about it, we might end up taking our own life. This illustrates the depth of suffering that a living being can undergo. By understanding the level of suffering others experience, we can see how selfish it is to be only concerned with personal suffering.

We can observe how even very vicious animals, such as lions, respond to anyone who always shows them great love and affection. Geshe-la says that he saw a program on television about tigers who developed a close, intimate bond with humans who have always shown much affection to them, and how they trust those humans. This shows us the benefits we give to others when we show them love and compassion.

Even with animal training, we can see that there is a difference between animals trained with real love, care and friendship, and those animals trained by force and violence. Those trained using the peaceful means of human love and compassion perform willingly, with no sign of fear or nervousness. Whereas animals trained by force perform unwillingly, out of fear, and may even show signs of violence towards their trainer. If showing love and compassion has such an effect on animals, then it will have a far greater effect on human beings. The benefits and the appreciation that we receive from others will be greater.

## 422.319 Quickly completing the spiritual grounds and paths

ས་ལམ་བློ་མཐོ་ཅད་ལྷུ་རྟུ་རྩེ་གསུམ་པ།

The ninth benefit of bodhicitta is to quickly complete the spiritual grounds, or quickly complete all the stages of the path.

Achieving the state of buddhahood, or full state of enlightenment, depends upon completing the two accumulations of merit and wisdom. With the full accumulation of merit and wisdom, then both types of obstructions will be fully abandoned, together with their latencies. Without bodhicitta we cannot complete these two accumulations. In fact it is said that bodhicitta is the main cause to complete these two accumulations, and to reach the state of buddhahood. The hearers and solitary realisers of the lesser vehicle have employed the wisdom

realising emptiness, or ultimate truth, but because the lesser vehicle lacks the method of bodhicitta, the hearers and solitary realisers can only reach the end result of liberation from cyclic existence, and not the full state of enlightenment, or buddhahood.

This shows how, unlike the lesser vehicle which employs the wisdom realising emptiness, the follower of the greater vehicle, employs the methods of both bodhicitta and the wisdom realising emptiness, which then leads to a state of buddhahood and the abandonment of both types of obscurations.

Without cultivating bodhicitta you cannot even enter the first mahayana path of accumulation. Without bodhicitta you cannot achieve buddhahood, even if you follow the secret mantra path. Even the greatness of the secret mantra path, which can lead one to buddhahood within a single lifetime, relies upon bodhicitta mind.

If we relate this to our practice, we have to realise that we must practise bodhicitta. We all want to be perfect beings, having as few faults as possible, and possessing as many good qualities as possible. We have to realise that the true cause to achieve this state is the cultivation of bodhicitta. Whatever form of practice we do, even if it is just feeding a bird, if it is conjoined with the bodhicitta motivation, then all our practices will become a cause to achieve the state of buddhahood.

Bodhicitta is the catalyst which transforms all our virtuous spiritual practices such as generosity, morality, patience, or the ten wholesome actions, into a pure cause of attaining buddhahood. From this point of view it is said bodhicitta is a cause to quickly attain buddhahood.

#### 422.320 You become the source of joy and happiness for all beings

འགྲོ་བའི་བདེ་སྲིད་མ་ལུས་པ་འབྱུང་བའི་ཞིང་མར་འགྱུར་བ།

The tenth benefit of bodhicitta is that you become the source of joy and happiness for all beings. This is clarified by the quotation "The hearers and solitary realisers are born from buddhas, and buddhas are born from bodhisattvas."<sup>1</sup>

Bodhicitta is like a very fertile field, which gives joy and happiness to all beings. If you can, please study the commentary in the text.

#### Visualisation while reciting the Twenty-one Taras' prayer

When doing the Twenty-one Taras' prayer we are offering praise to the twenty-one Taras and the prayer is known as the *Twenty-one Praises to Tara*. As you recite each praise it is good to visualise receiving the blessings, and then dissolving that particular Tara into yourself.

#### The meaning of the refuge prayer

In the last test there was a question on the refuge and generating bodhicitta prayer.

The first two lines say, "I go for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha until I achieve buddhahood".

In these lines one takes refuge in the three jewels in accordance with the mahayana tradition. This includes the meaning of:

1. The causes for going to refuge
2. The objects of going for refuge
3. The manner of going for refuge
4. The duration or length of time for going for refuge

#### There are three causes of going for refuge:

1. The **fear** of undergoing the suffering of cyclic existence in general, and the suffering of the lower realms in particular.
2. Having whole hearted **faith** that the three jewels give full protection from this fear.
3. **Compassion** for all other beings including oneself.

#### In the Mahayana tradition the three objects of refuge are:

1. The Mahayana refuge object of Buddha is the same refuge object as for the lesser vehicle.
2. The Mahayana refuge object of the law of Dharma is the quality of the Mahayana truth of cessation the Mahayana truth of the path to that cessation.
3. The Mahayana refuge objects of Sangha refers to the superior beings of the Mahayana path.

#### Manner of going for refuge:

If we study the words of this prayer, it indicates that the one who goes for refuge is "I", and "go for refuge" refers to the manner of going for refuge.

If you go for refuge to the three jewels in terms of causal refuge objects, they are:

1. Buddha as the perfect teacher
2. Dharma, or Buddha's doctrine as the true refuge or protection for yourself
3. Sangha is the true spiritual friend, companion or assistant.

If the three objects of refuge are a resultant refuge object, then these three are the ultimate future goals that you wish to achieve.

#### Duration or length of time of going for refuge:

The phrase "until I achieve enlightenment" indicates the duration for which one goes for refuge, which is until you achieve buddhahood or enlightenment.

The meaning of the generation and practice of bodhicitta prayer:

The next two lines in the prayer are, "Through the virtuous actions that I accumulate by practising giving and so forth, may I achieve buddhahood to benefit all sentient beings".

The term 'bodhicitta' is indicated by the aspiration "May I achieve buddhahood to benefit all sentient beings".

The meaning of "through the virtuous action (or merit) I accumulate by giving, and so forth" is quite self explanatory. The words "by giving, and so forth" indicate the deeds which you have created, which are like a substance. The reason you create these actions is "to benefit all sentient beings".

"May I achieve buddhahood", is the goal that you wish to achieve, in order to fulfil the stated purpose which is "to benefit all sentient beings".

<sup>1</sup> Madhyamika Avatara by Chandrakirti, verse one, chapter one.