

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་བཅུང་སྟེ།



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Let us generate the bodhicitta motivation of wishing to achieve full enlightenment for the sake of all beings. With this motivation we know why we are studying and practising the stages of the path to enlightenment.

422.3110 You become the source of joy and happiness for all beings (cont'd)

In the last teaching we heard this quotation from Chandrakirti's *Supplement to the Middle Way*.

“Hearers and solitary realisers are born from buddhas, buddhas are born from bodhisattvas.”

This explains how bodhicitta is the source of happiness for all beings. What we understand from the above quotation is that hearers and solitary realisers are born from buddhas. How are hearers and solitary realisers born from buddhas? They are born through following the teachings of the buddhas.

If we regard bodhisattvas and buddhas as being of the same continuum, then “Buddhas are born from bodhisattvas”, means that since the buddha to whom we are referring was once a bodhisattva, buddhas and bodhisattvas are of the same continuum. If we regard buddhas and bodhisattvas as being a separate continuum, the quotation “Buddhas are born from bodhisattvas” means that the buddhas are born as a consequence of relying upon bodhisattva spiritual teachers in the past.

From where are bodhisattvas born? They are born from bodhicitta, so from this point of view bodhicitta is the source of all happiness.

If a person becomes qualified as a bodhisattva at the moment that bodhicitta is generated, then we must ask how can bodhisattvas be born from bodhicitta? Genuine bodhicitta cannot be an actual cause to a bodhisattva, since they occur simultaneously. Thus the bodhicitta which is a cause for, and which gives birth to a bodhisattva is not a genuine bodhicitta, but it is a fabricated bodhicitta. Although it is fabricated, it is a bodhicitta which is very close to being genuine bodhicitta.

If we train ourselves in cultivating bodhicitta, such as by following the seven-fold cause and effect, we make gradual progress towards developing a fabricated bodhicitta, and eventually genuine bodhicitta arises. When genuine bodhicitta arises we are called a bodhisattva, and as a bodhisattva we continue training in the spiritual path. When you complete this spiritual path

you are called a buddha.

In terms of our own progress towards the state of buddhahood, we see how we develop from the state of being a bodhisattva to becoming a buddha. So the bodhisattva gives rise to buddhas: buddhas are born from bodhisattvas. As bodhisattvas we must follow the spiritual path which is the main cause to achieve buddhahood.

Further benefits of bodhicitta

Bodhicitta is the essence, or heart practice, of all the teachings of all the buddhas. It is the essence of the entire teaching on the lam rim. It is the source of excellent qualities and goodness for oneself, and all other beings.

Bodhicitta is like the one medicine which can cure all the diseases of cyclic existence and self liberation. Bodhicitta is regarded by holy bodhisattvas and noble beings as the most essential practice, which they hold in their heart. Bodhicitta is the seed for achieving all the qualities of the state of buddhahood.

Realising all these benefits of bodhicitta, how great it would be if we could generate such bodhicitta in our mind. We are very fortunate that we have this opportunity to study and discuss bodhicitta. As we learn more about the benefits of bodhicitta, we should try to develop the strong motivation to generate such a precious bodhicitta mind in this lifetime.

422.32 The way to develop bodhicitta

བྱུང་ཚུབ་ཏུ་སེམས་བསྐྱེད་པའི་ཚུལ་།

The next major heading, How To Cultivate Bodhicitta, has two sub-headings:

422.321 The actual stages in training in bodhicitta

བྱུང་ཚུབ་ཏུ་སེམས་བསྐྱེད་པའི་རིམ་པ་དངོས་།

422.322 How to hold aspiring bodhicitta through a ritual formula

སེམས་བསྐྱེད་ཚེ་གས་གཟུང་པའི་ཚུལ་།

422.321 The actual stages of cultivating bodhicitta

བྱུང་ཚུབ་ཏུ་སེམས་བསྐྱེད་པའི་རིམ་པ་དངོས་།

This has two main methods:

422.321.1 Instruction of seven-fold cause and effect

རྒྱ་འབྲས་མཁ་དག་བདུན་གྱི་སྐོར་གས་སྐྱེ་བའ་།

422.321.2 Instruction of equalising and exchanging self with others

བདག་གཞན་མཉམ་བཟུང་གི་སྐོར་གྱི་སློབ་ཐུང་བ།

422.321.1 Instruction Of Seven-Fold Cause And Effect

རྒྱ་འབྲས་མན་ངག་བདུན་གྱི་སྐོར་གྱི་སློབ་ཐུང་བ།

The main sutra source for this is the *Perfection of Wisdom* sutra. One of the main scriptural sources of early commentaries to this sutra is Maitreya's text *Ornament To Clear Realisations*. However *Liberation In The Palm Of Your Hand* indicates that texts by Chandrakirti, Chandrogomin and others are also scriptural sources for this instruction.

There are two main sutra sources on equalising and exchanging self for others. They are: Do-po köd-pa and Do phal cher (which is a collection of six sutras).¹ The instructions and commentaries on equalising and exchanging self for others include Aryadeva's *Four Hundred Verses* and Shantideva's *Bodhisattva Charyavata*. The scriptural source for condensed instructions are Kamalashila's *Stages of Meditation*, and Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland*.

Both these instructions on generating bodhicitta have their original source in the Buddha. From Buddha the lineage of instruction of seven-fold cause and effect is Maitreya to Asanga and so forth. The lineage of exchange of self for others is Buddha to Manjushri to Nagarjuna to Shantideva.

At a later date Atisha received the lineage of both instructions from his teacher Lama Serlingpa who lived in Baraputra, which is part of Indonesia. Later on Lama Tsong Khapa combined both lineages of instruction so that they can be practised at the same time. Prior to that the lineages of instruction were practised separately as a means of generating bodhicitta. If we follow Lama Tsong Khapa's instruction, then we practise both instructions together. However they are explained separately.

The seven-fold cause and effect method of training the mind is:

1. Remembering all other beings as one's mother
2. Remembering their kindness
3. Repaying their kindness
4. Loving kindness
5. Compassion
6. Superior intention
7. Bodhicitta

It is said that this instruction of meditating on immeasurable equanimity prior to the seven-fold cause and effect is the unique instruction of Lama Tsong Khapa. Having first meditated well on immeasurable equanimity, it is then much easier to later meditate on impartial, immeasurable loving kindness and compassion.

Whereas the meditation on immeasurable equanimity in the context of the four immeasurables is an instruction that comes from the famous yogi Gyalwa Ensapa, who was renowned for being able to achieve the state of

buddhahood in one lifetime. In the six session yoga of the four immeasurables, immeasurable equanimity comes first.

Discussion night:

Next week is discussion night Use the past teachings as topics for discussion.

The compulsory examination question will be:

Explain the four means of gathering disciples.

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 initial transcript is prepared by Jenny Molloy from Alan Molloy's notes. These notes are checked with Damien Busby's notes by Alan Molloy and any differences noted.

Adair Bunnett then compared Allys Andrews' notes against the transcript, and prepared this edited version.

Edited version checked by Alan Molloy.

¹ *Tibetan Tradition Of Mental Development*, p. 119