

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

འདྲེན་ལམ་རིམ་རྣམས་གྲོལ་ལམ་གྱི་བཟང་པོ་



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Make sure that you have a bodhicitta motivation, which is the thought that I must achieve bodhicitta to benefit all beings, and that it is for this reason that I am listening to these teachings on the stages of the path to enlightenment.

There are three main obstacles to generating bodhicitta. They are:

- Attachment or mental attraction to this life
- Clinging to the pleasures of the cyclic existence
- Desiring peace but only on a personal level

The appropriate meditations to counteract these obstacles are:

- for the first obstacle, meditating on death and impermanence
- for the second obstacle, developing renunciation by contemplating the suffering nature of cyclic existence
- for the third obstacle meditating to cultivate even the seed of bodhicitta, for instance producing a very artificial or fabricated bodhicitta, let alone cultivating actual bodhicitta

422.321.1 Generating Bodhicitta by Seven-Fold Cause and Effect

རྒྱ་འབྲས་མཉམ་དཀ་བདུན་གྱི་སྒོ་ནས་སྒྲོ་སྤྱད་པ།

We are now at the topic of how to generate bodhicitta using the instruction on the seven-fold cause and effect. In the seven-fold cause and effect method, the first six are causes and the seventh is the resulting effect of bodhicitta.

The order of the seven-fold cause and effect - from firstly recognising all beings as one's mother, through to bodhicitta - shows how the causes and effect are linked. We can see this linkage clearly by contemplating the seven-fold cause and effect in reverse order.

Bodhicitta is a genuine and spontaneous aspiration to attain full enlightenment for the sake of all beings. Such bodhicitta cannot be produced without having cultivated the thought of superior intention, which is taking personal responsibility for the suffering of all beings.

In order to cultivate this superior intention, one must cultivate great compassion by completely understanding the suffering of all other beings. In other words such great compassion depends upon having loving kindness towards all beings. If we are generating bodhicitta through this method of seven-fold cause and effect, then in order to cultivate this loving kindness we have to cultivate the first three causes.

Why are these first three causes so necessary? If we look into our own mental attitudes, then we see that we do not have this loving kindness towards all beings. We do however, have this loving kindness towards those who are close to us. Therefore in order to cultivate this loving kindness of the seven-fold cause and effect, we have to establish in our mind that all other beings are equally close to us.

In order to establish this, we meditate on recognising all beings as our mother, since the relationship with our mother is generally the closest relationship we have had. Once we have established that as we have this close relationship with all other beings, then naturally the next two causes - remembering their kindness, and wanting to repay that kindness - will develop automatically.

If we go backward in the lam rim, or stages of the path, then before cultivating the stage of remembering all beings as our mother, we meditate on immeasurable equanimity. Prior to that we have to realise the uncertainty of friends and enemies. This meditation is taught in the stages of the path for the person of medium scope.

In order to realise this uncertainty of friends and enemies we have to follow the small scope teachings on the stages of the path - the teachings on the law of karma - gaining conviction and faith in them. To gain that conviction we must take refuge in the Three Jewels from the depths of our hearts. Doing that depends upon having fear of the suffering of rebirth in the lower realms. To fully understand that suffering we have to meditate on death and impermanence.

If we go further back in this meditation, we see how this human life of leisure and endowments is so rare and meaningful. To fully realise how rare and meaningful this perfect human life is, we must rely upon a qualified spiritual guru or teacher, who has to show us all the teachings. To be able to find such a perfect spiritual teacher depends upon success in the practice of purifying negativities, and accumulating merit. Therefore one must first engage in practice of the six preliminaries, of which the primary one is the seven limb practice.

422.321.11 Immeasurable Equanimity

ཚིང་མེད་བཏང་སྒྲུབ་པ།

Before beginning the meditation on recognising all beings as being like one's own mother, one must meditate on immeasurable equanimity. To explain the

reason for this, the analogy of painting is used: in order to paint, the base upon which you paint must be even, soft and level. Likewise to generate bodhicitta our mental attitude towards others must also be even. If it is not, and we hold some close and others distant, then we cannot cultivate bodhicitta.

Here we must take note of the difference between the meditation on the immeasurable equanimity, which is the one discussed here as the preliminary to bodhicitta, and the immeasurable equanimity which is one of the four immeasurables.

The immeasurable equanimity which is one of the four immeasurables is the meditation in which one contemplates or wishes, "May all other beings be free from the thoughts of attachment and aversion of holding some close and others distant. How wonderful it would be if they were free of such thoughts of closeness and distance. May I be able to free them from those thoughts" and so on. Here the emphasis is upon the minds of other beings.

Whereas with the immeasurable equanimity which is a precondition to generating bodhicitta, the focus is personal - generating a state of equanimity in one's own mind.

It is very effective to focus upon one's own mind, seeing the biased attitudes of attachment and hatred, and trying to overcome these feelings, by seeing that with such an attitude there can be no true inner peace and happiness. Then we see the faults of having attachment to some, and hatred for others, and the negative influence this attitude has upon daily actions and decision making.

Before meditating upon immeasurable equanimity we should know about it very well: what the meditation actually means, and what its benefits are. This meditation is not to convince us that friends are not friends and enemies are not enemies. Rather its purpose is to get rid of attachment to friends, and hatred for enemies, and to enable us to see the benefits, not only at a theoretical level but also in a practical way.

If we examine very carefully then we see that our attachment is the main source of the problems for which we cannot find the right solutions. Because of attachment we have the problem of not having a particular friend. For the same reason, having found a friend then there is fear of losing that friend, and then there are the problems of difficulties in the relationship. There is also the problem of never being satisfied.

So if we look at the true cause of our problems in this way, we see they are all due to some conflict in our own minds. It is not something external. If we look inside, it is as if there is always some kind of war going on between our attachment and hatred. We become a victim of, and totally controlled by, that fight. We might have only one friend, but in our dealings with that friend we change, and show different moods. Sometimes we show happy moods, at other times we show a frowning face. This is all because of our attachment and hatred. The outer changes in our moods are all indications of our mental attitude to others.

Therefore we must realise that the reason why there are so many problems in our life, and the reason why we

must struggle so hard, is all because of conflict and delusion in our mind. In positive terms, with a settled mind then we shall find more peace and happiness within.

This shows how most of our problems are mentally created, but what is more important is to actually meditate on these problems, and see for ourselves that most of them are caused by attachment and hatred in our relationships with others. Deriving our knowledge through our own practice will give us impetus to overcome such delusions in our mind.

This desire or attachment within our mind can never be satisfied or fulfilled: it never stops wanting things. Desire or attachment can even want things that we cannot ever mentally and physically achieve in life. Being influenced by such unfulfilling desire is like being asked to carry a weight which is beyond your strength. Desire or attachment can be very misleading: it can make us pursue a goal which we have no hope of reaching.

There are many people where it so obvious that their problems and suffering are all because of some unfulfilled desire. Although the object which they seek in their mind is unachievable, because of desire they can not see this. In other words they are being completely deceived by some form of desire. They may experience a lot of suffering, yet to others they do not appear have any reason to suffer. Even though they have the best conditions surrounding them, driven by desire they cannot appreciate and enjoy those conditions. So they live a completely unfulfilled life.

In this way desire can bring such a great amount of suffering in life. Whereas with less desire, there will be more peace and satisfaction in our life. The Lord Buddha is an example of someone who, in this life, completely renounced all objects of desire, and who followed the path of non-desire or non-attachment. By following that path he reached the highest goal. Because of his practices, he is still admired as a great being not only by Buddhists, but also by followers of great religions such as Christianity or Hinduism.

It is wrong to think that if we diminish desire then we shall lose something in life. Rather we have to see that the opposite is true, that we shall gain more. In our personal life we shall find more satisfaction and have fewer problems.

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

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