

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

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14 October 1997

Let us cultivate the motivation of strongly wishing to achieve the state of buddhahood to benefit all sentient beings. For this reason, you should generate the intention of listening to this teaching on the lam rim in order to put it into practice.

Reminding Ourselves Of The Benefits Of Bodhicitta

We have been discussing the method of generating bodhicitta through the seven-fold cause and effect. You have just contemplated in meditation two of the many benefits of the bodhicitta, and it is because we see these many benefits that we trying to cultivate this bodhicitta.

As we have said, bodhicitta is the essence of all the mahayana teachings. Whether what we study and practise will be mahayana practice, depends upon whether bodhicitta is incorporated into it.

We have also leant that bodhicitta is the source of accumulating all the merit and wisdom needed to achieve enlightenment. As we learned, bodhicitta is like an alchemic liquid which can transform our spiritual practice into the causes for the truth body and form body of a buddha. So bodhicitta is the main practice of all the bodhisattvas.

Keeping these benefits of bodhicitta in our mind, we should then try to actualise this bodhicitta in our own mind.

422.321.122 Remembering The Kindness Of Motherly Sentient Beings (continued)

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Of the seven-point cause and effect for generating bodhicitta, we have discussed the first step, which is recognising all sentient beings as one's mother. Then we studied the second step which is remembering the kindness of all the motherly sentient beings. Within that step we have studied the kindness of the mother in the beginning, and the middle.

Our Mother's Kindness In The Middle: During Childhood

The kindness of one's mother in the middle includes all the kindnesses from birth and through childhood. We cannot remember all the support and care which was shown to us by our mother during our childhood. If you were a parent you would know this very easily because of your caring, kind feelings towards your own children. Even if you are not a parent, by observing parents you can understand very clearly a mother's dedication to her children, and the sacrifices she makes. Their affection is

so strong that in order to protect their child some mothers would be willingly to suffer their child's illness, even to the point of sacrificing their own life.

We spend more of our childhood with our mother than with our father, so it is mainly from her that we learn how to eat, drink and walk. Seeing her child take its first step brings so much joy and pleasure to the mother.

Geshe Doga recalls that when he sat his Geshe exam he was asked “What is the substantial cause of great compassion?”, and he replied “The substantial cause of great compassion is a mother's actions or love for her child.” The high lamas gathered there at that time, including Lati Rinpoche, commented that there was some sense in this point.

In childhood we receive so much love and affection from our mother, without which we would not have survived. The effort our mother made to protect and support us in a single day of our childhood is said to be equal to saving one hundred lives. Thus we can see how a child has a very special bond with its mother. Somehow the child learns more from, and depends more upon their mother. This shows the importance of her role in our upbringing.

From the mother's perspective, she has added responsibilities when she brings up children. As mothers spend more time with the children, they have more influence upon the children's lives. Once a woman has a child she has this spontaneous flow of love: automatically she must assume more burdens and responsibilities in her own personal life. We are learning this because that is what happened to our own mother. Geshe-la says that when he sees a pregnant woman he feels a very strong sense of sympathy, because it is not easy being pregnant, and then later on there is giving birth, and the effort of child rearing. It is not easy, and we need to know all that our own mothers did for us.

If we think about our school days, then not just on one day but day after day, year after year from kindergarten, through primary and then secondary school our mother supported us. She took us to school, picked us up and provided for all our needs - physical support, financial support and even just her time and interest. As said in the lam rim teachings, the mother's only concern is her children, and she wants to do everything she can to give them happiness, and to prevent any suffering.

We have to remember these things as it is easy for us to think that we achieved everything, for example a higher

degree, or a special skill or qualification, all by ourself. Whereas, if your parents had neglected their responsibilities when you were at school, then it is most likely that you would be lying in the street penniless, or wandering around and looking for trouble.

Our Mother's Kindness At The End: During Adulthood

Even after we pass childhood and reach adolescence we are financially still totally dependent upon our parents. We are also dependent upon them, particularly our mother, for our whole direction in life. Even when we reach maturity our mother's love does not stop. Unfortunately at a mature age we are in a position, whenever we find the opportunity, to challenge our mother, or our parents. From the mother's side however she is still concerned about our future, about our marriage and so forth. She always remembers our well being.

In this meditation we try to recollect the kindness and support our mother has given throughout our life. Then having done this in respect of our mother in this life, we recall how we have also received this kindness and support in other, countless lifetimes when she was also our mother.

If we consider the number of lives we had in the past, then the number of lives we have had as a human being is also beyond count, as is the number of times we relied upon another human being as our mother. In each life we received the same love and support as we are now receiving from our mother in our current life. In the same way we can think of our father as being our mother in the past. We can then extend this meditation on remembering kindness to all sentient beings.

We can also consider this kindness of mothers in non-human lives such as animals and birds. We can see how other creatures are also very affectionate to their young, and how they are willing to sacrifice their lives for their young.

Geshe Doga says that once when he was on retreat at Illusion Farm in Tasmania, he saw a peacock hen with three chicks. When a predator arrived, the peacock immediately gathered up all her chicks under her feathers, and just stood there protecting them at risk of her own life. In the end she came to no harm, but Geshe-la noticed how even birds and animals will give up their own life to protect their young ones. So we can also think about how in the past when we were born as an animal, or a bird we received the same motherly kindness and support from other sentient beings.

Through this meditation try to cultivate from our own side a pure mental attitude towards our mothers and parents. This is very important, and if we make progress in this meditation we see the amount of love and kindness we receive from our mother. When we remember her kindness, it helps us if we receive some abuse, or harm from our mother or parents, because we can see this abuse as very small compared to the love and support they have given us.

In this meditation on the first two stages of the seven-fold cause and effect, we establish in our mind that all other sentient beings have been kind in the same way as

our current mother.

So, we have finished these first two stages.

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

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