

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་རྒྱུ་ལམ་གྱི་ལམ་གྱི་བཅུ་དཔལ།



11 November 1997

As usual you should generate the motivation of listening to these profound teachings on the lam rim, which is to achieve the highest spiritual goal for all beings. In order to achieve this ultimate and highest goal you are listening to these teachings, so as to practise them.

422.321.124 The Fourth Cause: Loving kindness

ཡིད་འོང་གི་བྱུངས་པ།

Of the seven-fold cause and effect to generate bodhicitta we now discuss loving kindness. Loving kindness refers to the kind of love which has a specific mental attitude. It is said that the loving kindness which is generated as part of the seven-fold cause and effect is a cause which produces great compassion. This distinguishes it from general love which is not necessarily a cause for compassion, because, generally speaking, there is no order as to whether love or compassion will arise first.

Here love is the feeling one naturally has towards all beings as a successful result of the preceding meditative practices, beginning with equanimity, then remembering all sentient beings as one's mother, then remembering their kindness, and then wishing to repay that kindness. Having done all those preceding meditations very successfully, it is said that this feeling of loving kindness will then arise spontaneously. It is similar to the close, intimate and pleasant feeling you have towards your mother, for whom you feel much gratitude and love. This feeling of loving kindness arises as a result of your previous meditations, where the object is all sentient beings rather than any specific object.

The best way to describe this loving kindness is as the famous Geshe Potawa said to an old mother who asked him, “What is love?” He replied “It is precisely the very special, loving affection and feeling that you have for your child”. This loving kindness is the same love that a mother has for her beloved child,

How Is This Loving Kindness Different To General Love?

We should know the slight distinction between the kind of love which is generated as part of the seven-fold cause and effect, and the meaning of general love.

Generally love refers to a mental attitude which wishes other beings to experience happiness, and joy. One can cultivate the wish for others to have happiness, thinking, “how wonderful if they had such happiness”. We generate such a wish when we see others lacking such happiness and joy. This is the general meaning of love. What is most important here is that we fill our whole

mind, and inner continuum with loving kindness towards others.

Benefits Of Love

Knowing this general meaning of love we then ask ourselves “Do we possess such love in us?” Of course we do, but it is not enough and not perfect. Before we can generate a strong and genuine motivation to develop more love towards other beings we have to know the benefits of developing more love.

To see the true benefits of love it is best to see the benefits of showing love towards those who are close to one. By showing true love to them we can see the way they benefit, and the effect of this love which gives them support, and helps them. If you support those beings who are close, then what sort of effect does that have upon your own life and your relationships with them, and what is the effect of that love upon your own mindstream? If we consider all this, then we can see that the benefit of love is not just that through our mental attitude and good actions, we cause happiness to others, but we also find more peace, fulfilment and satisfaction within ourself.

If developing more love has such benefits and advantages to us and to others in our life, then what is preventing us from utilising the potential within us through which we can show more love towards others? We have the potential to fully develop this love within us, but because of the obstacles posed by opponent states of mind, we cannot make whatever potential of love we possess visible to other beings, especially to those closest and dearest to us. Then it becomes very difficult to gain love, trust and friendship from others.

Therefore, we should understand that to develop love we need to put a lot of effort into our meditations, thinking of the benefits of generating love, how to generate that love, and to whom we should show that love. It depends upon our effort in understanding the meaning of love, and our efforts in doing the meditation.

The Difference Between Love And Attachment

It is very important to be able to discriminate between love and all other types of mental attitudes such as attachment. With the correct knowledge of this difference, then one should be able to see whether one appears to others as showing love for them, or as showing attachment to them. With the correct discriminating knowledge of the difference between love and attachment you should also be able to observe others who are close to you, to determine whether they are showing you attachment or love. If they show

attachment you need not necessarily like that person, but at least you realise that you should not trust them as a lasting friend. So too, we are also judged by our friends depending on whether we are showing love or attachment to them. If they judge that we are showing more attachment to them, then in their judgement we are a selfish person with no concern or care for them. If they see us in this way it is an obstacle in our relationship. Whereas if we show more love to others then there is naturally more mutual care and benefit in that relationship.

Therefore, a discriminating knowledge or wisdom has a very important role in terms of guiding the mental attitude we should project towards others. If we project more desire and attachment, then the consequence will be more disadvantages and loss to both our own and others' lives. Even in terms of this very lifetime, we can see how many times we have become the victim of our own attachment to others, as well as the number of times we have become the victim of the attachment of others, which we have misinterpreted as love.

One very apparent difference between love and attachment is the different feelings we have for our kind parents and towards our partner or boyfriend or girlfriend. With a parent there is very great love, and an intimate bond with an automatic care and concern for them. Anytime they have problems or pain, you immediately wish them to not have that pain. That is love.

We need to develop this same attitude towards our partners and friends. Why? Because having a relationship is a very important factor in a stable and happy life. In other words, the major cause of the unending difficulties which we face has nothing to do with material things such as lacking food or drink, or clothing, or a place to live. It is mostly related to the lack of stability in our relationships, or because we have been deceived in our relationships.

Thus there is great benefit if, right from the beginning of a relationship, we always try to see that the most important cause is love, which we have to show to any person we like, and which we expect them to show to us. This depends upon having the correct discriminating knowledge as to what is love and what is attachment.

One should learn the teachings from the texts, but it is more important to relate it all to one's own life, trying to see the benefits and apply them in practice. As we learn of the great many benefits of universal love and compassion, what we really need to know is that the love or compassion which we have within us is very precious, and it needs to be nurtured, developed and strengthened. There is no benefit if we think of this good quality called 'love' as being some remote thing outside of us.

It is best if through engaging in this meditation practice of seven-fold cause and effect we cultivate the loving kindness we have just discussed. Or at least we should try to derive some other benefits from this meditation practice in our own life, by enhancing the love which we already possess in our mind.

What this teaching means is for us to take it to heart. Simply talking about love, or saying that we have love

for others, means nothing. For instance if you are married, then on your wedding day you said that you would share your life together in times of happiness and sorrow. It is easy to say that, but if those words are not integrated into your life, then this ceremony has no meaning.

An example of a couple who have real love for each other is an elderly couple who have lived together for many years. They always share everything: they share the good times together like having picnics, whereas if one is sick the other will immediately look after them. If they are joined together in true love, then they are like true servants to each other for their whole life. If one is sick in bed, the other sits by the bed, and is completely dedicated, and that is the most important thing. On the other hand we can see other couples who have lived together for many years. Suddenly if one is hospitalised the other, instead of being concerned and available, will go out to find another partner!

It is not easy to have pure love but at least by knowing the difference between love and attachment we can try to make an effort to make our feelings of love stronger than those of desire. If we can achieve this, it is a cause for a very healthy and stable relationship.

We should investigate our own situation. Can we live alone or do we need someone else as a friend? For most people it is very important to have a friend. Therefore, we have to think about how we can bring happiness in our life by having a friend, or how we end up with more suffering by not having a friend. In this way, by seeing that friendship is so important, we develop our skill in maintaining that relationship, and making it more mutually beneficial.

The eight benefits of the loving kindness can be found in the lam rim text. They are based upon Nagajuna's text *The Precious Garland*,

"Though such a person might not be liberated, they will achieve love's eight cardinal virtues. The merit of giving the three hundred types of food every day in the three times, cannot compare with the merit gained from meditating a short while on love. Gods and humans will come to love them: and give protection: they will have mental ease: and much happiness: poison and weapons will not harm: they will achieve their aims effortlessly: and be born in Brahma's world."

You should study these benefits in your own time.

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

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