

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

འཇིགས་རིམ་རྣམས་གྲོལ་ལཱ་བཅུངས།



18 November 1997

Try to cultivate the right motivation.

## 422.321.124 The Fourth Cause: Loving Kindness (cont)

ཡིད་འོང་གི་བྱུངས་པ།

In the last teaching we began to discuss loving kindness. According to the lam rim commentary we are using, there is no need to specify the object of this meditation, because it is the same object that you used in developing all the previous stages of the seven-fold cause and effect. However, Lama Tsong Khapa's text *Great Exposition Of The Stages Of The Path*, indicates that the object of this meditation on loving kindness is all those sentient beings who are lacking happiness and in this meditation on loving kindness, the mental attitude to be cultivated is one which sincerely, and genuinely wishes all beings to have happiness.

In general if one has progressed well in the preceding the stages of the seven-fold cause and effect, from recognising all sentient beings as one's mother, up to this stage of loving kindness, then as a result of your success in the previous stages, this loving kindness will arise without any difficulties and extra effort.

However there is a specific meditation to generate loving kindness if one is generating it separately, or if there has been little progress in the preceding three stages of the seven-fold cause and effect. Here one initially thinks of all one's friends and those who are close, and then reflects on the various ways they lack joy, happiness and satisfaction. Let alone possessing a very high degree of uncontaminated happiness, they do not even possess a mundane or contaminated happiness and joy in their life. Even more unfortunate is that you can see how they mistake suffering and pain for pleasure and happiness and so seek out that suffering and pain!

You naturally wish for those you cherish to have satisfaction and happiness, and this thought indicates that you have generated loving kindness. Then having cultivated love for your friends you do the same for strangers, by considering how in various ways those strangers are also deprived of happiness. Then by doing this same meditation you can extend your love to your enemies. In this way it is possible to generate loving kindness towards all sentient beings.

In practical terms we can see whether we really do generate and possess love for other beings. When we do not specify any other beings then through our meditation we feel that we can extend loving kindness to all other sentient beings. However if we check closely, then we find that we have a long way to go to actually cultivate a

true love which comes right from the heart, rather than a love which seems to exist in the space outside of us. Do we really have this true love coming forth from our heart for even one person? We see, when we reflect on this, that it is most likely that we do not.

This shows that, although we can talk of the benefits of showing love to others and we can say that we care for others, in terms of practical experience we fall far behind. So, we must put more effort into generating this loving kindness.

There is the potential within all beings to cultivate true loving kindness. Because of this potential, we feel this love whenever our mind meets with the right conditions, for instance if we engage in meditation on loving kindness or compassion. Therefore to develop this potential for love and compassion, we have to familiarise ourselves with this practice of generating love and compassion.

It is said that the first three of the seven-fold cause and effect form the basis to produce the thought of benefiting other beings which is loving kindness and compassion. What do we understand by loving kindness and compassion being the thought of benefiting others? We can understand the meaning of love and compassion to be that they respectively fulfil all the desires of other beings, and eliminate all that they do not want. For instance what all other beings desire is happiness, and that is the intention of showing them love: when we show love to others we wish for them to possess happiness. What other beings do not desire is suffering, and this is eliminated by showing compassion, since compassion is the wish for others to be free from suffering. From this point of view it is said that loving kindness and compassion are the thought of benefiting other beings, or the aspiration to achieve that goal for other beings.

In fact the more we know about the benefits of showing love and compassion the more we become inspired to develop it. We can see that the only way to truly benefit other beings is by developing love and compassion.

## The Measurement Of Having Cultivated Loving Kindness

Regarding the measurement of having cultivated loving kindness, one lam rim text says that the sign of having cultivated loving kindness to all beings is that whenever you come across any sentient being you feel so close and affectionate to them that, as the text says, “You feel like patting them on the head”. If this is the kind of feeling

you experience with any other sentient being you see, then this is the indication of having generated loving kindness.

### **The Eight Benefits Of Love**

Nagarjuna's text *Precious Garland* lists the eight benefits of meditating on love.

Prior to listing them, there is a verse in the *Precious Garland* comparing the benefits of offering a clay pot filled with food and drink to an infinite number of beings every day for the three times, with the benefits obtained from meditating on this love for even the instant it takes to snap the fingers. You gain more merit from that momentary meditation on love than from offering all that food to all those sentient beings.

Then the *Precious Garland*<sup>1</sup> lists the eight benefits which are:

1. Receiving love from godly and human beings
2. Receiving protection from godly and human beings

It is true that if you show love to other beings, it will be returned. Even if you show love to a lesser being such as an animal, they also return it. Pets show love for their owner not necessarily because of the food they receive, but with the meal the owner also shows affection. Then the dog, or pet, responds with affection, even guarding their owner's possessions, and doing other favours for the owner.

In Tibet there were many nomads, and their dogs were not particularly well trained. Even though they slept during the day, at night they kept awake and patrolled the area. This was a responsibility which the animals assumed in order to do a favour for their owners. They also showed affection for their owners by wagging their tails. So there is no doubt that any person who extends love to all beings will receive love and protection from the gods and other humans.

3. Achieving health of body
4. Achieving happiness and health of mind
5. Not receiving harm from poisons
6. Not receiving harm from weapons
7. Fulfilling all one's wishes effortlessly
8. Achieving the higher existence of Brahma<sup>2</sup>.

As a follower of the Lord Buddha's teaching, the main basis of our practice should be this compassion and love. Based upon this practice of compassion, or refraining from harmful actions to others, one follows the perfect training of the Buddha's teaching. In our everyday life we should also know the benefits of cultivating love and compassion. To mention one of these, compassion is the best way to resolve conflict with enemies. As said in many texts you gain true victory over your enemies by compassion, and through compassion this victory is lasting. Whereas, if we try to defeat an enemy by violent means, then although we may gain victory initially, later when the enemy gains strength and power they will retaliate and defeat us. Therefore, it is important to see the advantages of this practice in everyday life.

Once again Geshe-la extends his thanks to all of you who have done the written test. He is very happy with your answers.

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**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 original typescript is prepared by Jenny Molloy from Alan Molloy's original transcript, which has been checked against Damien Busby's notes. Adair Bunnett then checks the typescript against a tape recording, and edits the text, which is finally checked by Alan Molloy.

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<sup>1</sup> Verse 283 to 285

<sup>2</sup> Editor: "the higher existence of Brahma", according to Jetsun Rendawa refers to "the happiness of the Brahma Realm set in the first concentration of the Form Realm." The Form Realm has four concentrations and this is the first.