

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅུངས།



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Ensure that your body is fully relaxed and that you have the correct motivation to listen to the teachings. Develop the correct motivation by generating the wish for bodhicitta, the genuine wish to achieve full enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. Then think that in order to achieve this wish you are listening to, and will practise these teachings.

422.321.125 Benefits Of Compassion (cont)

སྙིང་རྩེ།

As we discussed in the last teaching there are countless benefits of cultivating great compassion. We have learnt that the stronger our compassion is, the closer we are to completing the goal of our spiritual path, which is complete and full enlightenment. We also learnt that compassion is an indispensable quality which enables us to benefit other beings. There is an example used wherein a child is caught in a fire pit. Although others might observe this with horror, the mother will jump into the fire to try to save her child. What forces her to do this? It is her compassion for the child.

It is very likely that if people share love and compassion for each other, then whenever one is in need of help they always get help and support from the other. There are many instances where we find this. Geshe-la told of a Tibetan sent to Japan for training. Where he stayed there was a huge gas tank which caught fire, and which was in danger of exploding. Realising that this could result in the death of many people, he grabbed the gas tank and threw it to a safer place. As a result he lost one hand but he saved the lives of many other people in the area. Likewise for us to be truly able to support our friends, partners and special friends we should develop love and compassion for each other, because if we do there will be mutual benefit.

The Method To Generate Compassion

To generate compassion Lama Tsong Khapa in “Great Exposition Of The Stages Of The Path” recommended to first generate compassion towards the being who endures the most suffering or the most pain. It is said that if, instead of focusing our compassion on a particular specific being, we focus it upon all other sentient beings, then while in meditation it may seem that we have had some success in cultivating compassion for others, however afterwards when we check and ask ourselves “To whom have we generated compassion?” We find that in respect to a specific being we have made no progress in developing compassion.

In the commentary text there are very clear instructions

on how to generate compassion using the example of a sheep about to be slaughtered. If you observe that sheep there is every sign of its fear and suffering, and it is clear that it has no protector. In this way we can generate compassion for that sheep, and then generate compassion for those sheep being led to the slaughterhouse, then extend that compassion to all the other sheep which will be slaughtered in the future. Thus we can generate compassion for all other sentient beings, by realising that they are the same as the sheep in the example.

We learnt in the small and medium stages of the path of the suffering other beings undergo. Think of those already in the hell realms and how they are subject to that suffering, and of those born in the animal realms and subject to the suffering of that existence. All sentient beings are subject to suffering because of being bound to cyclic existence. Thinking of the causes of suffering, which are negative or non-virtuous actions, we can observe that due to their non-virtuous actions all other sentient beings have suffered immensely in the past, are suffering in the present, and they will also suffer in the future.

and the reasons to achieve liberation from suffering, then Because of your understanding of suffering, its causes, and how with a sense of renunciation you truly wish to be liberated from this suffering existence, you understand that other sentient beings suffer in the same way, and that they too wish to be liberated from suffering. So you can generate compassion for them. Generating compassion to others is a matter of just replacing the object - replacing oneself with other beings. Understanding personal suffering and the reasons to be free of this suffering, one realises this is the same for other beings. This becomes compassion. By contemplating the fate of other beings you generate compassion for them.

When you contemplate your own fate you generate renunciation. Through this you realise that in order to eliminate suffering you have to eliminate negative or non-virtuous actions, and to create happiness you have to generate positive or virtuous actions.

We can see that cultivating compassion for other beings complements developing personal renunciation. Likewise when we cultivate renunciation it helps us to develop compassion for other beings. The key of this whole practice of developing compassion and renunciation is to inspire us to engage in more virtuous practices. Whether we think of our self or of others we

are all in the same situation of being subject to cyclic existence.

This is best explained by Chandrakirti in his text where he said that the initial cause is self grasping, which is the deep sense of 'I', and from this arises the deep sense of 'my'. From 'I' and 'my' arise attachment to those who are on our side, our friends, and hatred towards enemies. Impelled by attachment and hatred we accumulate negative karma, and as a result of these karmic actions, and without any choice, we revolve around in cyclic existence.

Here we are mainly talking about great compassion. But, even if we fail to produce great compassion in this life it is still worthwhile putting an effort into trying to do so. Then even if we do not generate great compassion in this life, our effort leaves some seed in the mind so that in the future it will be easier to generate compassion. It is even possible to produce compassion in the future just by meeting a mahayana spiritual teacher.

The Measurement Of Having Generated Compassion

As you will find in the commentary text, the measurement of having cultivated great compassion is described using the analogy of a mother with a child of whom she is extremely fond and affectionate. If we could have that same feeling towards all beings as the mother has for her child when it is in pain or suffering, then that is the indication of having cultivated great compassion.

Cultivating such great compassion depends upon training in meditation and the practice of compassion. We may find that in respect to a specific being that we have made no progress at all. The lam rim text gives the example of a sheep about to be killed by a butcher. Anyone who observes this sheep being slaughtered will feel some irritation in their body, to the point where it is easy for compassion to arise for this poor being who is in such a desperate state of suffering. After training in the generation of compassion by using a specific being, one then slowly generates compassion for other beings to the point of being able to generate compassion for all beings.

Not only do we have to make a deliberate effort, but we must contrive situations for our mind such as the suffering of other beings and so forth. Only then can we know compassion. Great compassion however is always spontaneous. It is not conditional upon thinking of the reasons to for sympathy and compassion, but rather great compassion arises just by observing any other sentient beings.

Next week in the discussion night Geshe-la suggests discussing the first five of the seven fold cause and effect, recognising all sentient beings as one's mother up to great compassion. Out of these five points he will choose three for your written test, which must be finished in half an hour. As is the study group tradition, after the last written test we shall recite prayers such as the 21 Taras, and Lama Tsong Khapa prayers, and then relax with tea and conversation.

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.