

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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འདྲེན་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅུང་སྟེ།



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Let us make sure that we receive these lam rim teachings with a bodhicitta motivation, and a mind of great joy and delight. How fortunate we are to have this opportunity to be able to hear and practise the Dharma teachings. Make sure that we have the bodhicitta motivation, wishing to achieve full enlightenment to benefit all beings, and the genuine thought of putting what we hear into practice.

We can consider ourselves as very fortunate for two reasons:

- We are not deprived of spiritual benefits because we have the opportunity to study and practise spiritual teachings.
- We are not deprived of worldly benefits, as in our living conditions there is no shortage of food and drink and such material support and comforts.

422.321.127 The Result: Generation of Bodhicitta Mind

བྱད་རྒྱུ་གྱི་མེས་སྟེ།

As a result of cultivating strong loving-kindness and compassion one generates superior intention, thinking “I alone shall free all beings from suffering and place them in everlasting happiness.” Thus you resolve to take upon yourself the whole burden of releasing all beings from suffering, and leading them to happiness and the state of liberation.

At this point, develop the meditation, by thinking that let alone helping all sentient beings, at this moment one is not in the position to help even one sentient being in this way, or even help oneself. This leads to the question, “If I do not have this capacity to help all sentient beings, is there any being who does have that capacity?” You investigate just who has these qualities of being able to benefit all beings. When you find such a being, you then generate the strong desire to reach that same level of capacity yourself, so that you can benefit all beings.

In this way you realise that only a fully enlightened being or buddha has the full capacity to benefit all sentient beings without any limit or hindrance from his or her own side. This is because fully benefiting sentient beings entails knowing the spiritual needs, interests, temperament and predispositions of all sentient beings: only a buddha has such knowledge. Other beings, for example hearers and solitary realisers - spiritual practitioners of the lower vehicle - do not have such qualities. Although they have abandoned the afflictive obscurations or obstructions to liberation, they have the fault of not having abandoned the obstructions to omniscience. Even bodhisattvas who are on the last part

of their existence in their last life as a sentient being are not equal to a buddha or a fully enlightened being, since they have not abandoned subtle obstructions to omniscience.

Therefore, to fully benefit all living beings one must achieve the state of buddhahood or fully omniscient mind. This state is only attained by abandoning all obstructions that exist, including the obstructions to the omniscient mind.

Here it is also customary to reflect upon all the qualities of a buddha, as we studied under the section of taking refuge. One should realise that all the qualities possessed by a fully enlightened buddha make one a perfect being to benefit other beings. So in this way, induced by love, compassion and superior intention, and understanding that unless you achieve the state of buddhahood there is no way that you can fully benefit all beings, one generates this strong wish to attain the state of buddhahood for the benefit of all beings.

Bodhicitta is defined as ‘the wish or aspiration to achieve full enlightenment for the sake of other beings’. Here ‘for the sake (or purpose) of other beings’ implies that there is a purpose that you want to help other beings to fulfil. What is this purpose? It is the state of cessation, or the state of liberation, or the ultimate state where all the faults and obstructions that need to be abandoned are abandoned. These are the qualities to be possessed within the continuum of other beings.

In the other part of this definition of bodhicitta, the ‘full state of enlightenment’ refers to the final state of ultimate enlightenment which you attain yourself - your own ultimate future qualities. This mainly refers to your ultimate state of attainment of a buddha’s truth body which has two aspects:

- The quality which resembles the state of cessation of having removed all obstructions to both liberation and an omniscient mind. This is the nature truth body of a buddha.¹
- The other quality is the ultimate development of your mind, for example, love, compassion, and wisdom knowledge. This is the wisdom body of a buddha.²

In this definition of bodhicitta the state of enlightenment

¹ Svavabhavakaya (Tib: ngo-wo nyid ku) p. 221 *Tibetan Tradition Of Mental Development*. The Svavabhavakaya is the void nature of the buddha’s omniscient mind (or wisdom).

² Jnana Dharmakaya (Tib: ye-shes chos ku) p. 221 *Tibetan Tradition Of Mental Development*. The Jnana Dharmakaya is the conscious state of the buddha’s mind, which understands all there is to know, which is attained solely by the buddhas.

which we wish to generate is not the state of full enlightenment which was attained by the historical Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, which was a quality of the Guru Shakyamuni. Rather in bodhicitta, one wishes to attain one's own future state of buddhahood. Why? The reason why one yearns to attain this state of buddhahood is to fulfil the needs of other beings. That is, the main aim of bodhicitta is focused upon fulfilling the purpose of other sentient beings.

As part of cultivating a motivation before engaging in any practice we say the prayer "In order to benefit all other beings I shall attain full enlightenment or buddhahood." You should try to not just recite the prayer, but at the same time you should try to remember the meaning of bodhicitta as we have studied it here. With this bodhicitta motivation we aspire to achieve full enlightenment. Why do we aspire to achieve full enlightenment? Because achieving full enlightenment is indispensable not only to fulfil our commitment, and wish to benefit other beings, but also for us to be able to fulfil all our work for our own sake.

Before engaging in any spiritual practice we need to cultivate this bodhicitta mind. It does not matter if we cannot generate genuine bodhicitta. With the mind of achieving full enlightenment for the sake of all beings, even with a contrived form of bodhicitta whatever form of practice we do thereafter is a much stronger form of practice and we have more merit because it is for the sake of all beings.

In short the meaning of seven-fold cause and effect is :

Including the preliminary meditation on equanimity the first three are called "The basis to create the mind which aspires to benefit other beings", and they are:

1. recognising all beings as one's mother
2. recalling their kindness
3. the thought of repaying their kindness

The next three are regarded as "The actual aspiration to benefit other beings". They are:

4. loving kindness
5. compassion
6. superior intention

Bodhicitta is the result produced by the love, compassion and superior intention.

What matters most to us is making progress in our own spiritual practice. To make such progress it is important to inspire ourselves by thinking of the benefits of the spiritual practice we do, and of the unique and fortunate life situation in which we have been born.

In terms of any spiritual practice and worldly benefit, we must think how fortunate we are to be able to enjoy spiritual teaching and material comforts. This excellent opportunity and these good conditions are all because of the causes created in the past. Such causes are the good karmic actions we did in the past, and the kindness of our precious spiritual teachers.

Geshe-la always tries to think in this way of his fortunate life situation, and that thought makes every moment bring joy. Even drinking a cup of tea comes from the kindness of one's guru. Look at our own situation. Not only can we listen to teachings and practise them, but we have also found a perfect spiritual teacher such as H.H.

the Dalai Lama, particularly those who went to such a holy place as Bodhgaya, and received teachings there. We are such fortunate beings and in the past must have done a great many virtuous actions to create such good karma, and all this arose through the kindness of one's spiritual teacher.

The qualities of H.H. the Dalai Lama are so great and the teachings so valuable, that it is important that we try to apply them to our perspective of things. Since we all follow and have faith in spiritual teachings, it is important that we try to apply this to our way of life. The qualities of H.H. the Dalai Lama are so great that he can teach according to the level of the listener - whether of high, medium or low intelligence they all understand at their respective level. Not only that, but he uses such very skilful means and wisdom in his teachings that whether the teaching is sutrayana or mantrayana, he can pass it on to all beings. To be able to meet such a perfect teacher and a living buddha, and having found a good life full of material comfort and receiving teachings, and the freedom to practise religion or any study, is all the result of karma created by past deeds. This encourages and inspires one to do the same now, so that in the future you can enjoy such good fortune again.

Spiritual practice is something we have to remember and keep in our minds at all times, so that whatever we do ,and whatever we experience in life, is integrated into our spiritual practice. When we find some happiness in life, we should not forget our spiritual practice or knowledge. Because if we forget, we shall become distracted or excited, and as a result of this we may face problems.

Rather if we think that these pleasures and the happy times that we experience are the result of good karmic actions we did in the past, we are inspired to do more positive actions, to create more good karma. At the same time when we face problems or even undergo some minor suffering, we need to be aware that the cause of that is the negative karma that we have created, and then we use that experience to refrain from creating any more negative acts. In this way our spiritual practice can progress consistently and our life becomes more stable.

Next Tuesday is discussion night. As usual, take the discussions as a good opportunity to learn and share knowledge with others. So everyone has to remember to be open to others with your views, to share your knowledge, and be patient with the new students. Geshe-la hopes discussion night will be very beneficial for you all.

In the written test the compulsory question is to identify:

1. the objects of refuge
2. the cause of taking refuge
3. the manner of taking refuge

How you approach the answer to this is up to you. Everyone is encouraged to do the written test, however it is up to individuals. Those who are not writing the test must use that time to do their own meditation.