

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

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ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅུངས།



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Try to cultivate the bodhicitta motivation, which is the genuine thought of achieving the state of buddhahood for the sake of all beings. Remember too, that it is in order to achieve this goal you are receiving these teachings, and that you will put them into practice so as to tame your mind.

## Disadvantages of Self-Cherishing (cont.)

It is important to recognise all the disadvantages of self-cherishing before seriously beginning to reduce this type of mind. You must see this self-cherishing mind as the cause of all the suffering you have undergone from beginningless time, and you can recognise it by seeing that deep down within us there is this strong self-centred view of “I”. With a life based upon this self-centred “I”, everything is directed towards bringing about personal benefit, and with this self-centred view as your base you will not yield to anyone else nor be willing to take any losses.

But does this self-cherishing attitude really secure personal happiness and benefits? You must investigate whether your life is happier and more meaningful as a result of living with this attitude. Shantideva said,

This self-cherishing mind has, over many aeons,  
always had a selfish purpose  
always desired things just for itself.

As a result one has undergone a great deal of  
hardship.

The end result is just suffering<sup>1</sup>.

Shantideva is referring here to the self-cherishing and the consequent suffering in the endless cycle of our lives. If we just concentrate on relating self-cherishing to our current life we see, as Shantideva said, that through the influence of this self-cherishing mind we have done a great many harsh and harmful actions. We see that actions done out of this selfish mind have resulted in hardly any joy, but have produced a great deal of suffering. Therefore we see the great disadvantages of this self-cherishing mind. So we come to understand that by reducing this self-cherishing mind, we shall have more rest in the mind. Thus we shall see the dawn of more happiness in life, and we shall be able to extend the benefits to those closest to us.

We are just going through the disadvantages of self-cherishing very briefly, because it is covered in great detail in the texts. What is important is to relate this whole teaching to your own mind and practice. Try to understand that in fact it is this self-cherishing mind which is really the cause of our restlessness, which makes our life and our relationships very unstable, which causes our mind to become afraid so easily, and which so easily turns a friend

into an enemy and vice versa. Regardless of your friends, relatives, wealth and so on, with a strong self-cherishing mind it is difficult to find meaning in life, or to find lasting peace and happiness, and it is difficult to get along with the people around us.

We can trace the cause of any problem that surfaces in our life, or our mind, to the self-cherishing mind. For example, if a husband has a very strong self-centred mind then it is very easy for him to think “Why do I have to work so hard when the money is being used by the entire family?” In the end this causes problems and unhappiness in the relationship, and affects the whole family. Others, on the other hand are very responsible family people. They think more of others than themselves. What brings joy to others brings joy to them. Try to understand the disadvantages of self-cherishing in life from your own experience. Then recognise self-cherishing as the enemy, and try to abandon it.

## 422.321.222.3 Advantages of Cherishing Others

གཞན་གཅེས་འཛིན་གྱི་ཡིན་ཏེ་སྐྱོད་མ་ནས་བསམས།

The third heading, ‘Advantages of Cherishing Others’, can be understood by knowing that these advantages are the opposite of the disadvantages of self-cherishing. In regard to the advantages of cherishing others, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life* says

All happiness that exists in the world  
Arises from the thought of cherishing other beings.

*The Guru Puja* says “The limitless excellent qualities arise from cherishing other beings” while the thought transformation [*The seven point thought transformation*] teachings say “Meditate on the kindness of all other beings.”

If we think of the advantages of cherishing other beings, we find that it is a source of all virtues. Without cherishing others no virtues can arise, and then there is no practice of moral ethics. Without the practice of moral ethics, there is no practice of single-pointed concentration. Without the practice of single-pointed concentration there is no practice of wisdom, and so there is no access to the state of liberation.

Likewise without this thought of cherishing others there is no bodhicitta, and without bodhicitta we cannot practise the six perfections, and without the practice of the six perfections we cannot achieve the state of buddhahood. Based upon this therefore, we can see the importance of this thought of cherishing others. We can meditate in this way, and extend it to meditating on the entire path to the state of liberation or to enlightenment.

Why do people practise moral ethics because of this thought of cherishing others? It is because moral ethics restrains us from engaging in the actions of killing other beings, stealing

<sup>1</sup> Editor: Chapter 8, verse 155:

Because of desiring to benefit yourself, O mind  
All the weariness you have gone through  
Over countless aeons  
Has only succeeded in achieving misery

and so on. In order for us to sincerely adopt such moral actions there must be some respect for the life of others. In other words, with this thought of cherishing others we refrain from killing, and such moral practices are a substantial cause to obtain any type of higher rebirth. Likewise with this thought of cherishing others we shall not steal their belongings, but will instead engage in the practice of giving. These practices of giving and not stealing are a substantial cause to enjoy resources and wealth in future lives.

If we cultivate this thought of cherishing others then naturally we shall make progress in our spiritual practice, and ensure a better rebirth in the future, or even liberation or full enlightenment. On the other hand, without this thought of cherishing others there is no hope of achieving even a good rebirth in the future.

There are two stories that illustrate the advantages of cherishing others in terms of this current life, and future lives. The first story concerns a ferry boat carrying so many passengers it was in danger of sinking. One person, thinking of saving the lives of the others, dived into the water to what seemed like a certain death. However, because of the power of his strong thought of cherishing others he did not die, but instead reached the other shore just like the other passengers.

The second story concerns a mother and daughter who were caught in a river current. As both were drowning they were each thinking of the other's life more than their own. The mother thought "As long as my daughter survives, my own life is of no concern" while the daughter thought only of her mother's safety. As a result of this they both went into rainbows, and took rebirth in the land of the gods.

Both these stories are relevant to our practice. Think of the needs of the person closest to you and wish them happiness. If that person has the same attitude towards you, then you will become very close to each other because you share this thought of caring for each other.

The bottom line is that if we really want happiness and peace, and to enjoy very good relations with everyone else then we have to cultivate the thought of cherishing others. We are all the same in that none of us wants any pain or dissatisfaction in life. To achieve this we must remove, or at least minimise, this self-cherishing mind.

What most matters to us is how much we practise and how much we apply the teachings we receive. We might not sacrifice our life to protect the lives of others, but at least we can become more patient and tolerant. By reducing the self-cherishing mind we become less vulnerable to the situations we face in life, for example good or bad words. We have to consider that right now we have this opportunity to look at our life, and to see how to make it happier, and how we can bring more happiness to the lives of others.

As we always say, when we talk of practice we always have to direct our thoughts, and the focus of our practice, onto our self. For instance we all know how easy it is to criticise a very selfish person. It is so easy to say, "He always thinks of himself!" In fact from that person's point of view you are also just as selfish so what you are saying is laughable. Therefore in your own practice, it is most beneficial to first try to correct your own faults before pointing the finger at someone else. As we always say, in your practice the focus must always be inwards.

Geshe-la would like to give you some homework, which is to memorise the *Eight Verses Of Thought Transformation*. In New Zealand at Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey's Centre they

had a performance of a dance using the *Eight Verses Of Thought Transformation* as a song. Sometimes if you memorise such important verses by heart you can use them in meditation practice, reflecting on each verse without needing to refer to a piece of paper. It is very handy to be able to do that.

The *Eight Verses Of Thought Transformation* was composed by Geshe Langri Tangpa, a most famous thought transformation teacher. Whenever you recite it try to think of his kindness and make a strong prayer that, like him, you can put the meaning of these verses into practice in this lifetime, and that these eight verses will always be in your mind as a guide in this life, and the many lifetimes to come.

The compulsory question for the test can be on the first verse of the *Eight Verses Of Thought Transformation*. Geshe Doga says he wants to use the entire *Eight Verses Of Thought Transformation* as the subject for the last test this year.

Last week the subject of the line from the Offering Prayer, 'Lama is creator of all' was raised. What are your thoughts on this?

*Sandra:* Your own mind is the creator. Are we particularly referring to the offering verse praising the guru as the 'all creator'?

*Jeremy:* In *The Bodhisattva's Confession of Moral Downfalls* there is a buddha called Buddha Who Arranges Appearances For All. So is it possible for a buddha to arrange or effect the experiences of sentient beings?

*Geshe-la:* There is a verse in Kathleen McDonald's book to read on this subject.

The Offering prayer says 'Lama is creator of all'. First of all we have to establish that the term 'all' as used in this line does not include all phenomena. In Tibetan the term 'all' can just refer to a category, so here 'all' refers to 'all virtues'. That is, all virtues arise in dependence on the Buddha. There is no virtue which is not influenced by, or the activity of, an enlightened being. So from that point of view the guru is the creator of all. With an assembly or meeting one can ask "Are *all* the people present?" This does not mean the whole world but the people in this particular context. In the case of this prayer the 'all' refers to 'virtues'.

So the guru is indeed the source of all virtue, of all the excellent qualities that can be achieved along the path to final, or ultimate enlightenment. In order to achieve the state of buddhahood we have to rely on the gurus. The followers, or Sangha depend upon the guru, as does the Dharma, because it is the guru who gives the teachings or Dharma to the followers or Sangha, who progress to buddhahood, ie. become buddhas. So are all dependent on the guru, who is the source of all excellent qualities.

It is discussion night next week, which is a very good opportunity for all of you to learn from each other. In order to make that discussion very sound and beneficial, everyone should adopt a very positive attitude in order to learn from each other, and to help each other clear up doubts.

As we are currently studying the subject of bodhicitta, love and compassion, try to make a special effort to develop this, and to increase your love and compassion for others. The more qualities we develop the greater our progress in Dharma topics will be. Sometimes people studying for higher degrees in mundane topics become more proud and distant and arrogant towards ordinary people: inwardly they have developed more delusion. Our study of Dharma should not be like that.