

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

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14 March 2000

As usual, try to cultivate the right motivation by thinking, “I shall attain the state of Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings, and it is for this reason that I am taking this teaching, and that I am determined to put it into practice.”

When you generate this bodhicitta mind, you are generating an altruistic attitude of benefiting other beings - an attitude which shows care and love towards others. You should therefore think of the benefit of generating even a thought of benefiting others. As Shantideva said, if you think of removing the pain of a headache from a single sentient being the benefit is enormous, let alone the benefit of removing the suffering and pain of all sentient beings.

We should try to develop our understanding of the benefit of extending help to other beings, and gain some conviction about it. Through this there is also the benefit of enhancing personal peace and happiness. It is said the root cause for this personal peace and happiness lies within ourself. If this is so, then what can be identified and recognised as the root cause of that peace and happiness? If we investigate, then we can see that it is cultivating the altruistic mind towards others.

Generating such a mind requires that we train our mind, which begins with making an effort to try to transform our mental attitude from its habitual self-centredness, into a mind which cherishes other beings. Given enough mental training, this culminates with having the same mental attitude of sympathy towards all beings without any discrimination. Regardless of like or dislike, love or hate, you show your sense of love and compassion fully.

With a trained mind, if you observe some suffering or dissatisfaction of another being, your immediate response is a wish for that being to be free from suffering, thinking how wonderful it would be if that being was free from suffering. Similarly, if you observe another being possessing joy and happiness, you think how wonderful it is that they have that joy and happiness, and you wish that happiness to last for a long time. This kind of mental attitude which you show equally to all other beings who you either love or hate shows true love and compassion towards other beings.

What you will find, is that by generating such an altruistic mental attitude you have counteracted and diminished the self-cherishing mind, and this results in more inner peace and happiness. We can understand this by checking how all our day-to-day problems are created by this self-cherishing mind: there is no end to

them. When we put an end to the self-cherishing mind, we have prevented the main cause of the problems.

Try to understand, as much as possible, the benefits of cultivating this altruistic mind, and the benefits of overcoming the self cherishing mind. On a regular basis, try each day to think of cultivating the altruistic mind. Then, as we undertake our various daily actions, think of conjoining all our actions with this altruistic mind: make an effort to constantly remember the benefits of this altruistic mind.

This practice of cultivating an altruistic mind and overcoming the selfish mind is a mind training practice. It is directly related to bringing about change within our mind. As said before, in order to engage in this practice, we first have to thoroughly examine our mind, develop an understanding of it, and see the advantages and disadvantages that can result from both the altruistic and the selfish ways of thinking respectively.

As much as possible, we must first develop our wisdom knowledge and through this wisdom knowledge, try to motivate ourself into changing our habitually selfish way of thinking. The difference between the self-cherishing mind, and the mind which cherishes other beings, is that with the self-cherishing mind, we are thinking merely of ourself. The self or the ‘I’ is so precious! When we have the strong self-cherishing mind, it is very natural that we are always concerned about our own needs: finding our own happiness, and avoiding suffering.

If, through this mind training, we cultivate the mind of cherishing other beings, then our whole thought process is transformed. Instead of being merely concerned with ourself, we are concerned about others, wanting them to find happiness, and wanting to eliminate their suffering.

## Which Mind Is More Beneficial To Generate?

1. We can think in terms of the number of beings involved. The self-cherishing mind thinks of only one person, the self. It thinks only of possessing happiness or eliminating problems and suffering for oneself. Whereas, when you think of other sentient beings, you are thinking of a countless number of beings.

Even if you limit yourself to your family, then it includes all your immediate family members, and you can extend it also to your grandparents and so on. Your concern extends to a large number of other beings.

2. To change this mental attitude of self-cherishing, we have to develop an understanding of how the self cherishing mind is very narrow, whereas the mind

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which cherishes other beings is thinking very broadly. If you think of the cause of your own problems, they are related to your own self-cherishing mind. This is because we are so attached to ourself that the self can never be fulfilled, and fully pleased. From this point of view, we can see how, by undertaking this mental training to overcome and diminish this self-cherishing mind, we can rid ourselves of all our problems.

As said before, when we think of making a contribution to our family, our country and to the world, it need not be material aid, because the majority of the problems of other beings do not always involve the lack of material conditions such as food, shelter and so forth. Through cultivating and showing true love and compassion towards other beings, not only are we benefiting those other beings, but also our country, and the world. We can see that promoting true peace in the world has to come from the mind - from changing the mental attitude and mind of all the beings living in the world. When that is changed into bringing more qualities of compassion in the minds of all, then they will feel secure, because there is safety and peace in the environment in which they live

I promised last week that we would start the lam rim teaching this week, so to keep this promise I shall at least say a few words. Of the six perfections, we are up to the last two perfections of concentration and wisdom. We have been discussing the topic of the perfection of concentration, which is specifically about calm abiding. Last year we discussed all the necessary conditions we must gather to achieve calm abiding, and we also completed the topic of the actual means of achieving calm abiding, which is applying the eight antidotes to remove the five obstacles or faults. The next topic of calm abiding is *By Depending Upon The Actual Means Of Calm Abiding, How To Achieve The Nine States Of Mental Abiding*.

Last week's teaching went for a very long time, so this week it is shorter. Geshe-la said that he may be like pigeons who behave in a way opposite to what you might expect, hoping that it will be of some benefit. You can notice that during the summer when it is hot, pigeons move to hotter places thinking it will bring more warmth during the winter. During the winter they take shelter in the shade hoping that the summer will not be too hot. Likewise last week was very long, but this week is short, in the hope that both are beneficial.

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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**

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