

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅུངས།



2 May 2000

Try to cultivate the bodhicitta motivation by thinking that the reason for undertaking this study of the profound lam rim teachings is to achieve the state of buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings. Also cultivate the motivation to put into practice whatever you learn from this lam rim teaching.

## 422.331.22 How To Train In Special insight

ལེས་རབ་གྱི་དོ་བོ་ལྷན་མཐོང་ལ་སློབ་ཚུལ་

In terms of the six perfections, this next major heading How to Train in Special Insight, concerns the perfection of wisdom. This lam rim teaching specifically elaborates upon the last two perfections, the Perfections of Concentration and Wisdom.

### What The Term ‘Perfection’ Means

As a reminder, the term ‘perfection’ as used in ‘perfection of wisdom’, refers to wisdom as both a cause and a result. The term ‘perfection’ (paramita in Sanskrit and pharchin in Tibetan) means to go beyond, or to go to the other shore. It can be explained in terms of the cause, in the sense of the means of going to the other shore, and in terms of the effect, in the sense of being the other shore at which you arrive. In terms of cause, the Perfection of Wisdom refers to the wisdom which realises emptiness and the ten fields of knowledge, possessed by someone on the path of learning. However, the effect aspect of the Perfection of Wisdom, literally the fully perfected and fully realised wisdom, is only possessed by a fully enlightened being.

### The Ten Fields of Knowledge

It is good to be able to list the ten fields of knowledge, because we come across them in many Scriptures. In fact, these ten can be divided into two sets of five.

The five lower classes are:

1. The study of poetry
2. The study of semantics or meaning
3. The study of lexicography or terminology
4. The study of astrology and mathematics
5. The study of performing arts

The five higher classes of knowledge are:

1. The study of painting and sculpture
2. The study of healing and medicine
3. The study of grammar and Sanskrit
4. The study of logic
5. The study of metaphysics or philosophy

You can check these lists with other references if you wish.

With regard to the heading, Training In Special Insight, according to the lam rim commentary that we are using there are three subheadings.

422.331.221 Presenting The View Of The Selflessness Or Emptiness Of Person

422.331.222 Presenting The View Of The Selflessness Or Emptiness Of Phenomena

422.331.223 Based On This, How To Realise Special Insight

### The Order Of Presentation

From this outline we can understand that of the two views of selflessness, the selflessness of person is presented before the

selflessness of phenomena. Whereas, in most of the scriptural sources on the Middle Way, such as Chandrakirti’s *Supplement to the Middle Way*, Nagarjuna’s *Fundamental Wisdom*, and other major scriptural sources of the Middle Way, the view of selflessness of phenomena is presented before the view of selflessness of person. There is a reason for both approaches.

Unlike the lam rim style teachings most of the Scriptures of the Middle Way present the view of the selflessness of phenomena first. One of the reasons is that this order is the same as the order in which the two wrong views of self-grasping of person and self-grasping of phenomena are generated. In other words, we generate self-grasping of phenomena first, and then based on that we generate self-grasping of persons. Based on that order, most of the Scriptures on the Middle View present the view of the selflessness of phenomena first.

In the lam rim teachings, the selflessness of person is presented before the selflessness of phenomena, and the reason is that this is the order which accords with the realisation of these two selflessnesses. In other words, one realises the selflessness of person before realising the selflessness of phenomena. Not only is the lam rim order of presenting these two views of selflessness the order which best suits practice, but it is also said that realising the selflessness of person is easier than realising the selflessness of phenomena.

While it is said that the selflessness of a person is realised before the selflessness of phenomena, this does not mean that one of these ultimate truths is more subtle than the other, or in other words that they are differentiated in terms of subtlety and coarseness. There is no such difference. According to the Middle Way School of Prasangika or Consequence, no distinction is made between the two selflessnesses in terms of subtlety and coarseness. The only difference between the two is their base.

The base for the selflessness of person is the person, whereas for the selflessness of phenomena it is other phenomena. When we talk of emptiness, or the selflessness of oneself, then that is the selflessness of person, but when we talk of the selflessness of one’s body, then we are talking about the selflessness of phenomena. There is no difference in terms of subtlety between the emptiness or selflessness of one’s body and selflessness of oneself. However, due to the different bases, it is easier to realise the selflessness of the person, ie oneself, first.

The view of the selflessness of person, is further explained under two subheadings:

422.331.221.1 How To Engage In Space-Like Meditative Equipose

422.331.221.2 How To Engage In Illusion-Like Post-meditation

Next is a brief explanation of each subheading.

### 422.331.221.1 How To Engage In Space-Like Meditative Equipose

Engaging in Space-Like Meditative Equipose refers to engaging in meditative equipose on emptiness, which is likened to space, where space means the lack of something to touch, or contact, or a lack of obstruction. Sometimes all phenomena are categorised into positive and negative

phenomena, and space is a negative phenomena. Of the types of negative phenomena, it is said that space is a non-affirming, negative phenomena. Its existence is just the negation of touch, of contact and of obstruction. Similarly, in meditative equipoise the emptiness which one realises is also a non-affirming negative phenomena. It is empty, or just the negation of inherent existence, existing by way of the phenomena's own character.

#### **422.331.221.2 How To Engage In Illusion-Like Post-meditation**

When arising from meditative equipoise, one is arising from a state where the only thing that is realised is mere emptiness, in the sense that all phenomena are empty of inherent existence. Upon arising from meditating on this, other relative or conventional objects also appear to the mind. When those things appear they are like an illusion. Why? Because of the influence of the meditative realisation of emptiness in meditative equipoise. In the post-meditation period, therefore, even though things appear to the mind as having inherent existence, or existing from their own side, one knows that this is not the truth, and that what appears to the mind does not accord with reality. It is a bit like the magician who, with his magic wand, transforms and manifests various things, like horses and elephants. Even though the manifested things appear to his mind, he knows that they are not real and that they are his own creation. That is the experience during the post-meditation period.

#### **The Four Points of Analysis**

The subheading, Engaging In The Space-Like Meditative Equipoise, is elaborated by explaining four points to be ascertained, which establish this view of selflessness. Of course, it is said, there are many other ways of establishing this view of selflessness. However this one, which uses these four points of analysis, is regarded as particularly effective. It is the most popular one, because it helps us to understand the truth of dependent arising at the same time as understanding the view of selflessness or emptiness. The four points of analysis are:

422.331.221.11 Ascertain The Negated Object

422.331.221.12 Ascertain The Pervasion

422.331.221.13 Ascertain The Lack Of True Oneness

422.331.221.14 Ascertain The Lack Of True Difference

#### **Why We Need To Realise Special Insight**

As mentioned in the commentary, it is important to know the reason why one needs to realise special insight. It is a unique path that one is choosing, one which is called the supramundane path.

As we discussed in the last teaching, the followers of many other schools of tenets, having achieved calm abiding, achieve the higher states of mind, like the preparatory level of the concentration of the form realm. They use this specifically to prevent all the very gross forms of delusions, and through this achieve lasting peace. Thus they use calm abiding to achieve the higher states, and to achieve all the goals of the mundane path. It is important to realise that in following this spiritual path one is seeking liberation from cyclic existence, or samsara. The reason why we must realise special insight, or this wisdom of emptiness or selflessness, is because, as we discussed in one of the previous teachings, this wisdom of emptiness is the only means of cutting the root cause of cyclic existence.

Cyclic existence refers to these contaminated aggregates, into which we are continuously born. If we examine the cause of these contaminated aggregates, the main sources are karma and delusions. Of these two, it is mainly delusions, which are responsible, because it is delusions which motivate the creation of karma, and the root cause of all delusions is self-grasping. Thus, one must realise special insight, because the wisdom of emptiness is the only antidote to self-grasping.

It says in the text that after realising this wisdom of emptiness, one will be able to remove all the faults of cyclic existence, even though one has not made any specific effort to attain all the qualities of the higher levels or realms, such as the various clairvoyant powers and so forth.

Geshe Doga also refers you to the text where there is a quotation from Nargajuna's text *Praise to the Praiseworthy*.

Although people who follow your doctrine  
Do not gain the actual dhyani planes,  
They prevent their rebirth existence,  
While Mara looks on helplessly.

Furthermore, it is said that other than realising this profound view of emptiness, there is no other door to the state of liberation. This wisdom of emptiness is like the guide who shows the path to a blind person. In a sense, this is saying that all the other five perfections are blind, whereas the perfection of wisdom leads the blind.

The importance of wisdom can also be understood using the analogy of a bird. Wisdom and Method are the two wings of the bird which one must use to reach the final state of enlightenment. Try to understand how important it is to engage in the path which uses both method and wisdom together. Of course, method is the bodhicitta mind, and wisdom is the realisation of emptiness. Without both, one cannot achieve complete enlightenment.

With regard to this Lama Tsong Khapa also said that without relying on this wisdom realising the ultimate truth, then no matter how much one familiarises oneself with renunciation, bodhicitta and so on, one will never be able to cut the root cause of cyclic existence. Therefore, make a diligent effort to try and realise this wisdom of emptiness and dependent arising.

The source of this text is the *Four Hundred Verses* by Aryadeva which says that even by the virtue of a little amount of merit, if one gains some understanding of emptiness, even with some element of doubt, the effect is such that it can tear the cloth of self-grasping into pieces. So, it is said, self-grasping is destroyed, just as a crop is destroyed by a hailstorm.

This shows us that even if we do not gain a full understanding of emptiness, to the point of the ultimate truth of emptiness, having just a glimmer of understanding, even with a bit of doubt, can counteract this self-grasping. As it says, self-grasping is like a cloth that is torn into pieces - it is useless. Some texts refer to desire or craving, rather than self-grasping, becoming inactivated. This is just to show the effect of meditation on emptiness and to inspire you. It is such a powerful weapon for abandoning desire and so forth.

As we have just learnt, Aryadeva said that when someone with a little amount of merit gains understanding of emptiness they gain so much benefit. The fact that we have direct access to this teaching on emptiness, and that we have this opportunity to practice Dharma and so on, all confirms to us that we have a great store of merit within us. So when listening to these teachings try to feel inspired to continue with further study and practice.

Of course, this is not to encourage you to think "I am so fortunate" with pride inflating your mind!

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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**

Transcribed from the tape by Vanessa Walsh  
Edited by Adair Bunnett and Alan Molloy  
Checked by Sandup Tsering and Alan Molloy