

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

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Keep in mind that the importance of always cultivating a motivation is that it helps to direct and keep one's mind on whatever spiritual practice is being performed. Therefore, as a motivation we should try to cultivate the bodhicitta mind by generating a genuine wish to achieve complete enlightenment for the sake of beings. Then think that to fulfil this wish for enlightenment one is now receiving these teachings, and also that one will follow up these teachings by practising them.

Whenever we spend time cultivating our motivation we should examine the state of mind that we possess. If it is a faulty state of mind we should modify it. We may have a state of mind that sees our practice as a means of achieving some goal in this life, which would bring more happiness, satisfaction, and pleasure. We have to recognise that goal as a faulty mental intention. It is also a faulty intention if our practice of Dharma is to find a better rebirth, such as a human or godly rebirth, in the future.

Cultivating the proper motivation means replacing or modifying these faulty states of mind with the altruistic mind of benefiting other beings, so that whatever practice we do is to benefit other beings.

422.322.2 How to Safeguard the Bodhisattva's Vow We Have Received

We are up to the second heading which is how to safeguard the bodhisattva's vow we have received. This heading is explained under two subheadings, which are (1) instructions on maintaining aspiring bodhicitta, and (2) instructions on maintaining engaging bodhicitta.

422.322.21 Instructions on Maintaining Aspiring Bodhicitta

The instructions on maintaining aspiring bodhicitta are explained under two further subheadings which are (1) maintaining the aspiring bodhicitta which we have already generated in this lifetime, and (2) maintaining the aspiring bodhicitta in future lifetimes, so that our mind is never separated from the aspiring bodhicitta mind.

422.322.211 Maintaining Aspiring Bodhicitta Generated in This Lifetime

There are four types of causes which maintain the aspiring bodhicitta that we have already generated within us in this lifetime.

422.322.211.1 Remembering the Benefits of Bodhicitta

The first cause of maintaining and safeguarding the aspiring bodhicitta is remembering the benefits of bodhicitta. We studied a list of ten benefits of bodhicitta in the section on the bodhicitta teachings.

Even if we do not possess the genuine or fully-fledged bodhicitta we still have to recognise all the benefits of the bodhicitta mind, understanding how precious and wonderful it is. If we are relating the benefits of bodhicitta to our own practice then we have to see that they follow from the degree of love and altruism that we hold in our mind towards other beings. Even though that love and care for others is not a true bodhicitta, we can understand that for us it is no different from true bodhicitta. We have to see that it is the source of extending benefit to all other beings, as well as the source of preventing the giving of harm to others.

We have to understand how this loving nature in the mind is precious. As long as one has that nature then one will engage in the practice of, for instance, the ten wholesome actions, because the ten non-virtuous actions (like killing or stealing and so forth) will be abandoned. All non-virtuous actions are prevented by the virtue of having such an altruistic thought towards other beings.

422.322.211.2 Retaking the Bodhicitta Vow Three Times Morning and Night

The second cause to develop and increase the bodhicitta mind is to retake the vow three times in the morning and again at night. Of course those of you who have been doing the Six-Session Yoga do this as part of that practice.

However if you do not have the Six-Session Yoga commitment then you can do the same by simply saying the prayer of taking refuge and generating bodhicitta three times in the morning and evening. This prayer includes both the practices of taking refuge and generating bodhicitta. It also reviews all the commitments of generating the bodhicitta mind.

422.322.211.3 Preventing the Development of Bad Thoughts

The third cause is preventing any ill thought towards any other beings. This means generating any thought of questioning the point of benefiting a particular person, and thinking “I shall stop helping that person”. It is said that giving way to such a thought of not benefiting others saying, “I won't help that person” is the cause of losing the bodhicitta mind.

Having such a thought shows that there is a prejudice in your love and altruistic thought. Therefore, it is saying here that one has to be very strong about preventing such thoughts, especially when someone who you have helped a lot shows you hatred in return. They give a response that is completely the opposite of what you expect! At such a time it is said that someone on the bodhisattva's path has to pay special attention to their practice, exerting themselves to make a special effort, because the circumstances make it very easy to lose the bodhicitta mind.

Even in our ordinary life it is harder to be patient when you receive harm from someone you care about and always help. It is very difficult for parents to endure it when their children are rude or mistreat them in some way. It is very difficult when those who you have always tried to help, in terms of giving material objects to please them, or giving spiritual advice and so on, turn against you.

When you face such circumstances it is very easy to lose your determination to benefit all sentient beings. It is so easy to say, “OK, I shall stop helping them if this is how they respond to whatever good deeds I do”. If you think in this way then your bodhicitta mind is declining. In order to prevent such thoughts of not helping that person any more, try to train your mind by thinking that maybe others behave abnormally because it is in their nature, or personality. Try to see that they are behaving in such a wrong way, and not acknowledging your help because of their ignorance of what, or who, is benefiting them, and what is harming them. Try in this way to continuously maintain your good heart towards the other person all the

time.

As said before, on the one hand it is very difficult to be patient, but on the other hand if we think deeply then we can see that in these circumstance we need to be even more patient. In fact we need to be showing more love and more compassion towards the other person. If we observe another person facing the same situation where they are receiving a hostile response from someone they have been helping, we feel very sorry that the other being is not able to acknowledge the benefit and help that they receive from others. If we have this deeper understanding then instead of losing our patience we can see that we should be even more loving and even more compassionate towards those other people.

422.322.211.4 Accumulating Merit

The fourth cause of increasing bodhicitta is to accumulate merit. This means that in order to further develop the bodhicitta which we have already generated, we should be engaging as much as possible in any virtuous actions which can boost our spiritual merit. It is saying that if we engage in any of the other Six Perfections, such as the perfections of giving, morality, patience or joyous effort, they all contribute to increase our bodhicitta mind. However, the immediate cause to increase bodhicitta and intensify its force is meditating on love and compassion.

422.322.212 Maintaining Aspiring Bodhicitta in Future Lifetimes

There are two sets of four causes to safeguard the bodhicitta mind in future lifetimes. These are:

422.322.212.1 The Four Black Dharmas

422.322.212.2 The Four White Dharmas

422.322.212.11 Deceiving One's Guru, Abbot or Master by Lying to Them

The first of the four black dharmas is deceiving one's Guru or Abbot by lying to them.

The Guru or the Lama is the one who you regard as your spiritual guide and teacher. Abbot is a title that is used in different ceremonies following the Vinaya teachings, such as ceremonies of bestowing the celibate or layperson's vows. Master, or in Tibetan *lopen* is another title with different roles as explained in the Vinaya teachings. The role of the Master includes the Vajra Master in tantra and so on.

422.322.212.21 Abandoning Telling Lies

The antidote to the first black dharma is the first of the four white dharmas, which is abandoning the telling of intentional or deliberate lies. One should not lie to any other person even as a joke. Of course you cannot prevent it if you happen to tell a lie out of naivety or ignorance.

422.322.212.12 Feeling Negative about the Virtuous Acts of Others

The second black dharma is feeling negative about the good or virtuous actions performed by others.

422.322.212.22 Being Honest with Others, Without Any Deceit

The antidote for the second black dharma is the second white dharma, which is being honest with others without any deceit or cunning thoughts

With the **second black dharma** showing some negative feelings about the good deeds done by others indicates a sort of dishonesty in one's mental attitude towards others. It obviously shows a lack of acknowledgment of their deed as being a positive one.

The **second white dharma** is being honest towards others in the sense of acknowledging their good deeds, and rejoicing in those good deeds. On top of that, one should even try to think of ways one could cause that person to do even more virtuous actions. For instance if the other person is following the path of lesser vehicle, and if it is appropriate in the sense that the

person is ready to listen, then one should be encouraging that person to follow the path of the greater vehicle. Try to cause that person to strive for complete enlightenment for the sake of all other beings.

422.322.212.13 Speaking Unpleasantly to Bodhisattvas out of Hostility

The third black dharma is speaking unpleasantly to a bodhisattva out of hatred and ill thought.

422.322.212.23 Recognising Bodhisattvas as Spiritual Teachers

The third white dharma is the antidote to the third black dharma. It is recognising the bodhisattvas as spiritual teachers, and accordingly offering them due praise. Although bodhisattvas are used as an immediate example here, in fact one should be extending this practice to all other beings. One should train one's mind to recognise all other beings as spiritual guides, and try to see all other beings with a very pure mental attitude.

422.322.212.14 Acting Deceitfully, Without Altruism

The fourth black dharma is showing deceit and cunning towards others, out of the lack of a sense of responsibility for the welfare of other beings.

422.322.212.24 Leading Others to the State of Complete Enlightenment

In fact the meaning and the practice of the fourth white and the second white dharmas is being honest with all other beings without showing any deceit, so these two are pretty much the same in meaning.

The corresponding Tibetan terms for 'deceit' and 'cunning' have very specific meanings. The Tibetan word for deceitfulness is *gyu*. It means pretending to others that you possess real knowledge and real qualifications even though you do not possess those qualities. An example is if you lack inner peace and serenity and mental control, but outwardly you try to show to others that you are a very calm controlled person. Usually the motivation behind such pretence is to gain to gain some material benefit, respect, admiration and so on from others. The Tibetan *gyu* has a much broader meaning than the English term 'deceit' usually implies.

The Tibetan word for 'cunning' is *yo*. This term is used to indicate those actions where we try to hide all our weaknesses, faults and our shortcomings. The motive for doing this is also to gain material wealth or respect or so on. This was what the second dharma means when it refers to being honest towards others without any deceit or cunning.

422.322.22 How to Maintain Engaging Bodhicitta

This section concerns the Bodhisattva vows which include the 18 root vows and the 46 secondary bodhisattva vows.

If we do not discuss each of these vows, we would finish the lam rim teaching over two more sessions. But then what would we do until the end of this year? I thought about teaching on the topic of Mind or on Taking Three Basic Bodies into the Path. However, I am not sure whether there will be enough time to cover either of them. So, we shall continue next week with the teaching on the Bodhisattva vows. After the teaching we shall have tea in Landcox Hall and do some mantra rolling for the new Buddha statue, which is arriving soon.

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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