

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

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Cultivate your motivation by generating the thought, “I shall attain the state of buddhahood to benefit all sentient beings, and in order to fulfil that goal I shall undertake these profound lam rim teachings, and follow them up with practice.”

Root Downfalls of the Bodhisattva Vows (cont)

10. We begin tonight's teaching with the tenth root downfall of the Bodhisattva vows, which is **destroying towns and so forth**.

There are four main categories of the type of place to which this vow refers.

The first is a village, which is a place where a small number of men and women who are not ordained live together in families.

Second is a *tong kye* in Tibetan. It is a town where, according to the scriptures you can study all the 18 classes of the arts, such as sculpture, and statue making. In these days it is a place where universities are situated.

The third type of area is called in Tibetan *gang*, which literally means far away. It refers to an area where there are more than four races of people.

The fourth category, called *tong ta* in Tibetan, is a place which is smaller than a town, but where merchants and business people come together for commercial activities.

The motivation behind destroying these places is some mental delusion.

The action takes place when you destroy such a place through whatever means.

Of the eighteen root downfalls the fifth to the ninth root downfalls¹ are sometimes called the root downfalls for kings, whereas the tenth is called the downfall for ministers. The reason for this is that downfalls 5-9 are more likely to be committed by kings, whilst the tenth one is more likely to be committed by ministers.

11. The eleventh downfall is **teaching emptiness to those who are spiritually unripe**. There are some defining criteria in relation to the person who is the object of this root downfall.

Firstly, the unsuitable or spiritually unripe person to whom you are teaching emptiness must be one whose mind is not fully trained, in readiness to receive all these teachings on emptiness.

Secondly, teaching emptiness to that person must frighten them.

Thirdly, the person must actually possess the bodhicitta

mind.

The teaching on emptiness that you give to that person refers to the concept of emptiness, which is free of all forms of mental fabrications, mental superimpositions and constructs.

The actual root downfall will occur when as a result of teaching emptiness to a spiritually unripe person as just defined, that person becomes frightened with the result of the loss, or lessening of their bodhicitta mind. It might even cause them to fall into the path of the lower vehicles.

12. The twelfth root downfall is causing others to turn back from supreme enlightenment or the state of buddhahood.

The person on whom you commit this downfall has actually entered into the Mahayana or the path of Great Vehicle by having already generated the bodhicitta mind. You can discourage them by saying that they have no hope of achieving complete enlightenment because to do so they have to engage in the six perfections. You say that engaging in these deeds of the Bodhisattvas is extremely difficult and almost impossible. You change their mind by saying, “Wouldn't it be better if you followed more realistic goals like the goal of the Hearer Vehicle which is just, achieving the state of liberation from cyclic existence for yourself”.

If you are able to persuade another being who has already entered the Mahayana path to give up that path, and to enter into the path of Lesser Vehicle, (such as the Hearer vehicle), you complete the action of this twelfth root downfall.

13. The thirteenth root downfall is causing another to give up their Pratimoksha vows. The Pratimoksha vows which are individual or self-liberation vows². They are called self-liberation vows because they are vows that are primarily to achieve the state of liberation for the person keeping that vow.

This root downfall is committed by causing one who possesses any of these Pratimoksha vows to give up their vow. It is telling them that if instead of following the Pratimoksha vow you generate the bodhicitta mind, and follow the Mahayana or the path of Greater Vehicle, then you can remove all delusions and all the faults of your three doors of body, speech and mind.

If, influenced by your words, the person gives up this Pratimoksha vow you then acquire this root downfall.

¹ 5:stealing the property of the Supreme Jewel, 6:giving up Dharma, 7:taking away the saffron-coloured robes, 8:committing any of five immediate deeds, 9:generating wrong view

² The Pratimoksha vows is a set of eight vows some of which are for lay people and are for the ordained.

14. The fourteenth root downfall is **discrediting the Hearer Vehicle**.

This means making comments about the Hearer Vehicle such as, "That vehicle does not show the means of overcoming all mental delusions such as desire and so forth". This causes others to believe that the lesser vehicle of the Hearer or Solitary Realiser has no capacity to remove all mental delusions, or to lead one to achieve liberation from cyclic existence.

In the fourth root downfall, which is giving up Dharma, we mentioned that the Dharma includes the Dharma of the three vehicles including the Hearer, the Solitary Realiser and the Mahayana. The main difference between the fourth root downfall, giving up Dharma, and the fourteenth, discrediting the Hearer Vehicle, is that the fourth root downfall mainly refers to the scriptural sources of those lesser vehicles, saying that those sources are not actual word of the Lord Buddha. Whereas here in the fourteenth root downfall, discrediting the Hearer Vehicle refers mainly to the actual path, such as the internalised path of these lesser vehicles, or the possible realisations to be gained in this lesser vehicle. This fourteenth downfall is saying that those realisations have no potential capacity to eliminate all delusions and to liberate oneself from this cyclic existence.

15. We now turn to the fifteenth root downfall, which is lying to others about having realisations of the profound truth.

This refers to lying about having gained realisations of the profound truth of emptiness, when you have not actually done so.

In order to actually commit this downfall, the person to whom you are lying must be someone who has a sound faculty of hearing, and also an understanding of what you are saying.

From your part you lie about this realisation of emptiness. You say things like "I have gained these profound realisations which are the direct path to achieve liberation, and out of compassion and care for others, I am telling you so. If you also gain the same realisations, then you too will reach the same state."

When, having heard all your lies, your listeners actually come to believe your statements with a clear knowledge and understanding of what you have said, then we say that you have committed this root downfall. In fact it is said that for a fully ordained monk or nun this is a root downfall of not just their Bodhisattva vows, but also their Pratimoksha vows.

16. The sixteenth root downfall is seizing the property of the Three Jewels.

This downfall occurs when those who possess the Bodhisattva vows receive property belonging to the Three Jewels from those such as kings or ministers. A king or his ministers can impose a fine on the population, including the Sangha. In order to pay those fines the Sangha have to give up all their belongings. As a Sangha community they may even have to give up property which is basically the property of the Three Jewels - the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. This property of the Three Jewels then becomes the property of the state, or the king, or his ministers.

The minister may later decide to distribute this property

to others, and if among the recipients there is someone who possesses the Bodhisattva vows, then like the king they are also creating this root downfall.

17. The seventeenth root downfall is establishing harmful rules.

This root downfall refers to giving away the belongings of meditators to those who are practitioners of daily recitations or daily prayers. This root downfall is committed on one who is engaged in meditation to achieve the calm abiding, the single-pointed state of concentration.

Out of ill thought towards the meditator, you steal their belongings or even the necessary basic living conditions for their meditation, and give it to other practitioners who are just engaged in recitations or prayers.

As a result of your actions you interrupt the meditator's search for calm abiding.

18. The eighteenth root downfall is giving up bodhicitta, which refers to losing the aspiring bodhicitta mind.

Following this, the next topic is the four types of binding mental delusions, which we shall discuss in the coming teaching.

It would be good if you could read about the four binding mental delusions in the meantime. The tradition of monastic study is that the students are always required to memorise the source texts before the teachers give the commentary on those texts. When they begin the class the teacher always asks the students whether they have memorised the source of the teachings. In line with that tradition it is also good to try to do some preliminary study about the coming teachings.

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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