

Study Group - "Liberation *in the Palm of Your Hand*"

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

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12 December 2000

We begin tonight by engaging in a meditation on bodhichitta together. Assuming that you are all very familiar with the meditation to generate bodhichitta mind, try to make sure that you have the right physical posture and frame of mind. Make sure that you are physically very relaxed with your mind drawn inwards, and then just let this bodhichitta mind arise from your meditation.

We meditated together for a while

Please come out of your meditation now. Only the Buddha can teach or hear Dharma while in a state of meditative equipoise. For us ordinary beings it is not feasible to do so. We cannot do a sitting meditation, and at the same time study or listen to the Dharma, or indeed any other activities.

You can guess Lama Tsong Khapa's status from his statue. His right hand is at his heart in the gesture of teaching Dharma, and his left is in the gesture of meditative equipoise, resting below the navel. This symbolises his attainment of complete enlightenment.

We are not going to spend much time on teachings tonight. Remember that the great Kadampa masters said that there are two important elements to remember in whatever activities you undertake: those at the beginning and those at the end. At the beginning it is important to set the right motivation, and at the end it is important to dedicate the merit from the activity.

In terms of life form we have obtained this excellent and very rare opportunity of a human life of leisure and endowment, with a sound mind having the capacity to discriminate right from wrong and so on. In terms of the spiritual teaching or Dharma, we have the opportunity to study the complete teachings of the Sutrayana and Mantrayana, and we have met the perfect spiritual guide. So we are in a very fortunate situation indeed.

The most beneficial thing we should do in order to make these opportunities meaningful, and to extract some purpose from this life, is to engage in any actions which help us to calm our mind, whether they be called meditation, Dharma practice or some other activity. We should think that in essence calming our mind is the best action we can do to make these opportunities meaningful.

As a means of calming the mind, we are extremely fortunate that we have studied the whole teaching of the lam rim extensively. If you think of it, the lam rim teachings are the essence of all the teachings of the

Buddha. It is presented to us like a prepared meal, easily applied and easily understood.

I am happy and delighted to have had the opportunity to give the complete lam rim teachings to you. It is the culmination of all the effort I have put into in the study of the lam rim. I was 19 years old when I received extensive teachings on this lam rim commentary from the late Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, Junior Tutor to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The teachings went for over a month, and each day I had to travel to and from Sera to Lhasa where the teachings were given, a journey of about 8 kilometres each way.

We all have to consider how fortunate we are to have this opportunity to study the lam rim. What is important now is to apply these teachings, as much as possible, to calm our mind and particularly to generate bodhichitta mind.

Then we read Chapter 10 of Shantideva's "A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life" together.

While I read the following prayers, try to cultivate the bodhichitta motivation. Our purpose for engaging in this spiritual practice is to achieve the unsurpassed state of complete enlightenment, and through achieving that to free all other beings from their state of suffering and lead them to the state of complete enlightenment.

Then Geshe-la read some prayers, saying at the end,

Pabongka's *Liberation In The Palm Of Your Hand* was first taught at Choezang hermitage, which was some distance from Sera Monastery. When I saw the words Choezang hermitage in this prayer I remembered studying Lama Tsong Khapa's *Essence of Eloquent Speech* there with my friend Geshe Sonam Rigzin.

I want to thank you all for making this great commitment to studying the lam rim teachings, which I feel greatly honoured and happy to have given. Many of you had the great opportunity to study the complete lam rim. This has not only benefited you in your individual practice, but also when you have presented the lam rim or Buddhism to other people. So many of you have gained a lot of benefits. Having made so much effort in studying the lam rim teachings, it is important to retain the knowledge you have gained during the course of your study, and to put it into practice as much as possible.

I am also very delighted because I have heard words of praise from others about Tara Institute, its members and its students. This admiration from others shows that the Institute has a good name, and reflects well upon the people involved in the Centre who are trying to put the

teaching into practice. Putting the teaching into practice, shows others what a good human nature and personality is like. I believe that this is why the Centre has such a good name, and receives so much admiration from others. I would like to thank you, and encourage you to continue your study and practice of Dharma.

Overall the other spiritual activities of the Centre have all gone really very well. This includes Monday night Introduction to Meditation classes, children's Sunday School, and school visits to introduce the Dharma. I want to personally thank those who have given their time to make all those activities possible, and so very successful. I understand that many of you have little spare time, yet you find the time to give to the Centre to run its activities. That is greatly appreciated.

We must also remember that through the Centre we can reach a great number of people, and there is even more potential to reach an even greater number of people in the community. On Monday night the Centre only charges \$5. Really, in these days that is almost nothing. For a cup of tea I pay \$2.50 or \$2.75, and that does not include a biscuit. Here, after Monday Night meditation we provide tea and a biscuit. The other teachings are all freely accessible to people.

This shows that we have created the facilities and conditions to provide teachings, and the opportunity for people to learn meditation. So we must really appreciate the people who give time and effort to make that happen. The effort that they make can reach a great number of people and be of great benefit to them.

Dennis Moore then expressed the gratitude of all students for the teachings and asked that Geshe-la teach us the lam rim again and again until we understand it. He thanked Sandup for the translations and for being a spiritual friend. Both Geshe-la and Sandup each received a bunch of flowers as a small gesture of appreciation.

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Note on authentication

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