

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅུང་ས།



15 April 1997

Try to cultivate a bodhicitta motivation by thinking "I shall listen to these teachings on the stages of the path and calm my mind, and through this create the causes to attain full enlightenment for the sake of all beings."

Morality as Non-Harmfulness

In recent teachings we have discussed the practice of morality, in particular the morality of not causing harm to any other beings, and the morality of refraining from the ten non-virtuous actions. As we study the dharma, it is important to remind ourselves that the main purpose of our study is putting the dharma into daily practice.

With a very clear understanding of the practice which we are undertaking, we shall feel more positive and confident that our practice really does have some benefit and relationship to daily life. Recall that the kind Buddha said that the source of peace and happiness in the world is the path of non-harmfulness. We should try to relate the meaning of these teachings to our own practice and knowledge of the outer world. Then we can understand very clearly that true peace, happiness and harmony in the world has to come from the minds of all the beings living in that world. If all those living beings have more mutual respect for each others' lives, then naturally the world becomes a better and safer place in which to live.

Even on an individual level, if we each follow the path of non-harmfulness, then wherever we go, or whoever we meet, we shall be accepted and liked because of our respect for their life, and because we cherish this practice of non harmfulness. So it is not only at an intellectual level, but also as a result of our own experience that we learn that peace and happiness is not something that we can collect from the outside world, but is something for which each and every living being is responsible. In fact cultivating love and compassion towards other living beings is the basis for fulfilling our wish for peace and happiness.

Even if the subject of the teaching is very simple it is still very important for us to contemplate it fully, so that we can put it into practice. Think carefully about the statement just made: if we practise the morality of not causing harm to others, then this has effect of bringing more happiness to our own life and also solving our problems. Rather than just accepting this statement blindly, we must consider whether this is indeed the case. If we show love and compassion to others we certainly solve their problems, but how are we helping ourselves? In fact if we truly practice the morality of not

causing harm to others, or the morality of maintaining wholesome actions, then the result of such moral ethics is that our mind will be more peaceful, calmer and at rest. We also develop our mindfulness and alertness. So morality is a very good base upon which to make progress in meditation. With a sound moral base, we shall find the practice of single-pointed meditation much easier. Thus, finding a sense of peace and rest in life is not just the result of particular material conditions, but rather more importantly this sense arises from conditions which must be created within our own mind.

The Story of Taka Lama's Attendant

There was a very well known monk who was the attendant to a famous Tibetan Lama called Taka Lama. [The attendant was interned with the other Tibetan monks in Buxa, the internment camp for Tibetan refugees in India.] He became very close to the late Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, spending a lot of time with him, and was very fond of telling interesting stories about his life in Tibet.

As an attendant to the great Taka Lama in Tibet, he enjoyed great privileges, and had a great deal of influence over the public. Wherever he went he had servants, and enjoyed a life of luxury. However following his escape to India he lost all these privileges. He did not even have enough food to eat, and lived a life of great poverty. Yet in this poverty he found more contentment and mental peace than he had ever experienced in the past. What he was saying is that being at rest, or feeling very happy is not really determined by outer conditions.

Three Types of Vows

There are many ways to integrate the practice of morality into our life. Whoever follows this practice should know very well the benefits of practising morality, as well as the shortcomings of not practising it. If we talk of the practice of morality as a formal practice then there are three types of vows which we can take.

1. The vows of self liberation, which includes the vows of bikkshus, bikkshunis and also lay vows
2. Bodhisattva vows
3. Secret mantra vows.

For a full explanation of these vows, and the practice of morality you should read the commentary in the Lam Rim text. Before taking any vow it is very important to make sure that you can keep it, and that you fully understand the benefit of that vow.

The celibacy vow in particular qualifies you as a Sangha, or member of the spiritual community and qualifies you as Buddha's representatives. You should see that every effort you make in maintaining this vow is no different from the effort made in promoting and preserving the teaching of Lord Buddha. Also any vows that you take should be seen as the source of all your happiness, both now and in the future.

Types of Lay Vows¹

If you do not take such celibate ordination vows you can take the lay person's vows. These are five in number.

The four root vows are:

1. Refraining from killing
2. Refraining from stealing
3. Refraining from lying
4. Refraining from sexual misconduct

The fifth vow is refraining from intoxicating drinks which is not a root vow but is integral to the lay persons vow.

Categories of Holders of Lay Person's Vows²

There are six categories of holders of lay vows. Translated literally they are:

1. Holder of one precept - this person holds only one root vow
2. Holder of some precepts - refers to a holder of two root vows
3. Holder of most of the precepts - refers to one who holds three root vows
4. Complete holder of lay person's precepts - this person holds all four root vows
5. The holder of lay person's vows by virtue of taking the refuge precepts - this is someone who just takes refuge precepts. Such a person is still considered to be a holder of the lay person's precepts
6. Holder of the lay person's celibate vow - this person holds all four root vows, with the vow to refrain from sexual misconduct being replaced by a vow to refrain from all sexual conduct.

The vow to abstain from intoxicants is regarded as integral to the practice of a holder of the lay person's ordination.

If you break any of the four root vows that you have taken then you should apply the four means of purification, which gets rid of negativities. However if you break all four root vows you must take the root vows again, and this will restore them.

Morality can be observed by taking such vows, but even without taking such vows or precepts, we can still practise morality by abandoning the ten non-virtues.

Discussion

¹ This part of the translation has been reconfirmed as the correct interpretation. There are two explanations that emphasise the importance of the abstaining from intoxicating drinks. The first is that there is a total prohibition on taking any intoxicating drinks if one is a holder of any of the lay vows. The other explanation is that although there is no blanket prohibition on intoxicants, the taking of the vow to abstain from intoxicants is integral to or fundamental to the holding of any of the lay person's vows.

² Editor: These divisions of the holder of lay person's vows (In Tib. "Ge-nyen") were clarified with Geshela.

Student: In the Ganden Lhagyama that we recite before the teachings there is a verse which says:

Whatever non-virtues of body, speech and mind
I have accumulated since beginningless time
And especially any transgressions of my three vows
I confess over and over again with fervent regard from my heart

What three vows does this refer to?

Geshe-la: The pratimoksha (individual liberation), bodhisattva and secret mantra vows

Headings with outline numbering are derived from the Text. Headings without outline numbering are derived from Geshe Doga's commentary.

Edit methodology

The initial transcript is prepared from Alan Molloy's notes. These are checked with Damien Busby's notes by Alan Molloy and any differences noted.

Adair Bunnett then compares her notes against the typed transcript and prepares this edited version.

Edited version checked by Alan Molloy

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22 April 1997

Let us generate the motivation of bodhicitta.

We should cultivate this thought of aspiring for full enlightenment for the sake of all beings. It is for the purpose of achieving full enlightenment that we listen to this profound teaching on lam rim, and generate the strong intention to practise it afterwards.

In previous weeks we covered the topic of morality by focusing upon both the benefits of practising morality and the disadvantages of not doing so. The next subject is the four doors of moral downfall.

The Four Doors of Moral Downfall

In order to ensure that we can sustain the practice of morality, we not only need to know the doors of moral downfall, but we must also know how to close those doors, and in this way protect our moral practice.

1. First Door of Moral Downfall:

Lack of Knowledge

To practise morality we need to avoid certain actions, while adopting others, so therefore we require some knowledge or discrimination of what is virtuous, and what is non-virtuous. If we lack this discrimination, then the result will be the accumulation of a pile of negative actions and karma in our mind.

It is like understanding what is needed to keep a house and its outer environment very clean and tidy. To do this you must know which things are truly useful and necessary and which are not, and on the basis of this knowledge, you keep the useful and discard the rest. In this way there will be fewer things in the house and so it will be easier to keep it tidy, clean and manageable. Without this knowledge, we think that each and every object might be useful one day. So we keep them, and if we cannot bear to discard anything, then gradually the whole house will become full of rubbish. Eventually the house will have more rubbish than the outer environment!

Likewise you need to understand that to keep the inner environment of the mind clean and peaceful, an important condition is to get rid of the negativities or actions that need to be avoided. To do that we need to know which actions need to be avoided, and then we can avoid them, and we need to know the actions that need to be adopted and then we can adopt them. It is like keeping your outer environment neat and tidy. Doing that not only contributes to the happiness in your own mind, but also contributes to the happiness of those who come to visit. If the cleanliness of the outer environment can have such an effect on both our own mind, and the minds of others, then there is no need to mention the

effect upon our mind and our life, if the inner world of our mind is kept very clean.

If, for example, we wish to keep the morality of refraining from the ten non-virtuous actions, we must firstly recognise each of the ten non-virtues which need to be abandoned. For example, to fully recognise the non-virtue of killing we must understand its components. Before you can actually kill, you must have the intention to do so. So to refrain from killing you must refrain from the thought of killing, as well as the actual action of killing. So by recognising this non-virtuous action of killing very clearly, you see the need to generate the motivation to refrain from even the thought of killing, let alone refraining from putting that thought into action. In short, to abandon any non-virtuous action you must first recognise that action very clearly. Otherwise out of ignorance you might commit that action.

2. Second Door of Moral Downfall:

Lack of Respect

This door relates to the importance of having respect for the Buddha, the Buddha's teachings, the followers of Buddhism and even towards one's own spiritual practice. If you possess a vow of self liberation, or bodhisattva vows, or tantric vows, or any spiritual quality such as good heart you need to cherish such qualities as very valuable and precious. With respect we can prevent many negative actions. For example we have respect for our parents because of their kindness at all stages of our life - from the beginning at birth, through childhood, and then to the later stages of life. This respect will inspire us to avoid using abusive words to them, and thus prevent any negative actions towards them.

If we recollect the qualities of Lord Buddha, especially his teachings, and so cultivate faith and respect for both the Buddha and his teachings, then this can also encourage us to show the same respect to the followers of Buddhism, and to our spiritual friends. In this way we can also realise how the spiritual qualities we have cultivated within us are so precious - like a wish fulfilling jewel. Through such a feeling of respect we can then experience some sense of peace and harmony in our mind.

It is said that:

- the three objects of refuge, or the three jewels, are the objects of our respect and faith since they are the special field of faith
 - one's parents are the special field of respect and
-

gratitude

- sentient beings are the special field of suffering.

For these reasons, we should try to see why we have to feel respect towards enlightened beings, spiritual friends, the teachings of Buddha and towards our own spiritual qualities. This has the benefit of bringing peace to our mind, and bringing harmony to our relationships with others.

In particular we must think of the benefit of the spiritual practice, or training, which we ourselves are undergoing. We should think that this spiritual training, is the true teacher, and that it truly represents the Lord Buddha. It can satisfy all that we desire and wish, as well as expelling all that we do not want. This training is the everlasting source of happiness in this life. No matter what action you do - resting, walking, sitting, or whoever one accompanies - as long as this spiritual practice is safeguarded and sustained, then you will have happiness, joy, and peace. Even in the future, following this spiritual practice will lead you in the right direction in all future lifetimes. So it is very beneficial to relate or associate all our spiritual knowledge and practice towards our own mind - our own mental or inner continuum.

Whatever we learn about in the spiritual teachings must be practiced. Our spiritual knowledge must be applied to calming our mind. Because the mind always accompanies us, whether we are happy or not, is all mainly determined by this constant companion - the mind. So if we apply these spiritual teachings to our mind, then our mind will find calm and thereby happiness.

We should not behave like a monkey when it engages in warfare with a bird. When the bird flies up high in the sky, the monkey runs here and there to show that it is very brave. But, as the bird comes closer to the ground, the monkey loses its courage and becomes more timid. As the bird comes even closer the monkey covers both its eyes with its hands, and may even urinate with fear. In spiritual practice we should not be like the monkey and be unable to apply the spiritual teachings when hardships confront us - forgetting our practice when a problem falls upon us. At all times we should be mentally courageous and brave, and strongly motivated to practise dharma.

3. Third Door Of Moral Downfall: Too Much Delusion

It is very obvious that if we have a strong forceful delusion, such as desire, then any vows that we have taken may deteriorate, and this can damage other spiritual commitments. We can see then, that it is very obvious that delusions can influence us to commit many negative actions. When overpowered by delusions even someone who has a very good natured mind can appear as a evil person. It is as though the delusions cover all their good qualities. Under the influence of delusions we do many non-virtuous actions instead of continuing with virtuous ones.

So, we must know the best way to challenge and counter delusions. Generally, the most intense delusions are challenged first - that is the one which has most the immediate influence. To give an example, there may be

a very vicious, large dog in the far distance, and a very vicious small dog beside you. If you are so worried about the big dog biting you that you ignore the small dog, then of course the small dog will bite you first! So it is best to run away from the small dog first.

Although the main target is counteracting the very influential or root delusions, at the same time you must defend yourself from the more minor, or lesser forms of delusions. In other words whilst we are launching an offensive at delusions, at the same time we are being defensive. Otherwise you will have no success. Do not think that some delusions are so minor and small that they can be neglected, or think that they can do no harm to one's spiritual practice.

Therefore we should try to overcome any delusion no matter how small and minor it is, and we should remain very alert and mindful of all forms of delusion. Depending upon the types of delusion there are specific remedies that can be applied.

The delusions and their remedies are:

Desire	meditate on the ugliness, or negative side, of an object of desire
Hatred	meditate on loving kindness
Pride	meditate on <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the suffering of sickness, old age and death• the uncertainty of friends and enemies in terms of how quickly they change• the uncertainty of how quickly one's status changes from high to low, how even some people in a very high position can in a short time go to gaol• uncertainty in terms of wealth - how rich people become poor
Ignorance	meditate upon the reality of the dependent arising of all things

These are the specific remedies to delusions, whereas meditation on emptiness is the remedy to any type of delusion.

4. Fourth Door of Moral Downfall: Lack of Conscientiousness

This will be covered next week.

Geshe Doga says that he was very pleased with the exam answers. You have all done very well. Looking at your answers it seems that the students will reach enlightenment before the teacher. Anyhow Geshela was very happy that almost all of you did the test. He thinks that, generally, in any organisation you join, you should follow or fulfil all the rules of that organisation. So whatever you choose to do, you should stick with the discipline as this will be most fruitful, and give most satisfaction to your mind.

The meaning of offering:

Offering = Chod pa (Tib)= Puja(Sanskrit) which means to please. So, if you please someone then you are making offering.

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29 April 1997

Generate a bodhicitta motivation by thinking "I wish to attain full enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, and in order to fulfil this wish I am studying these teachings, and putting them into practice."

4. Fourth Door of Moral Downfall: Lack of Conscientiousness

If this door of lack of conscientiousness is not shut, then faults in our practice of morality may arise.

Whatever type of action we do, whether walking, sleeping, eating, drinking and so on, it is most important that we do not forget to adopt wholesome actions and to abandon unwholesome ones. In addition, we should always be alert and observant so as to avoid any fault in our actions. Through this we can prevent any wrong doing arising as a result of this fault of not closing the door of lacking conscientiousness.

In fact, if we perform a good, wholesome action then it is personally beneficial, but if we perform a negative action it will be personally harmful. Since we instinctively only want benefits and not harm, then we are responsible for preventing harmful actions and safeguarding the positive ones, and mindfulness is the most important factor in sustaining such a practice.

We must not forget what actions are positive and what actions are negative. To this mindfulness we also apply alertness, which always "keeps an eye on", or investigates our actions. If they are positive then we should feel gladness, and joy, and be positive. If however we find that our actions are negative then we should feel regret, thinking "I should not be doing that action. It is not good for me." In this way we are instructed to adopt the virtuous.

Of course we cannot completely prevent shortcomings and negative aspects in our daily actions. For instance if you have taken any form of vow, or even if you have not taken a vow but are pursuing the perfection of moral ethics, it is possible that despite your efforts you might break your vow, or harm your moral practice. If this occurs you should immediately apply the four forces of purification.¹

The force of regret is feeling regret that one has broken a vow, or any form of moral practice. The reason for feeling this regret is because your downfall will result in unwanted suffering. But when you think of the consequences of the immoral actions which you have

committed, you feel not only regret. Performing that action is the equivalent of taking a strong and deadly poison into your body. The fear of the consequence of your action is so very strong, it will drive you to do something about it - to rid yourself of this poison of immoral or negative actions.

So, influenced by the force of regret and in order to be rid of this poison, one then applies the force of object, which means the practice of taking refuge, and all the other means of purification.

In this way you have not only gained some knowledge through your spiritual practice, but you have also gained some benefit through putting that knowledge into practice. Without putting these spiritual teachings into practice you gain no taste or benefit. It is like having delicious food in front of you but not being able to eat it: one can only benefit from the dharma by putting it into practice.

If we study properly, then each dharma topic consists of the essence of all the practice of dharma. Consider for example the practice of morality. If we closely study this practice we see in it all the other practices. In fact we see the entire spiritual path. We see the relationship of morality to the law of karma for instance. Without understanding the law of karma we cannot understand the benefits of practising morality, and the disadvantages of not doing so. Our motivation to practise morality is based upon our knowledge of the law of karma, which is that the result of virtuous action is happiness, whereas the result of non-virtuous action is suffering. We have to integrate any spiritual practice with all other aspects of spiritual practice, for example the three principal paths, or the six perfections. Then we see how everything is connected to these practices.

As part of developing our moral practice we should always examine how well we are progressing. One way is to review our daily actions before going to bed - not just in terms of worldly benefit such as how much money we made on the day, or how much we achieved in business. Rather here we are concerned with our future life - how many actions we did to benefit us in our future lives. If we remember having done a very positive or virtuous action during the day, then we should rejoice, because rejoicing in such actions is a cause to increase those actions.

Whereas if one recalls something harmful or negative which will bring harm to future lives, then one should feel regret and think "What can I do to purify that negative action?" To purify that negative action means

¹ Editor: The four means of purification are generally categorised as: Force of regret, force of base (or object), force of remedy, force of promise (or resolve).

to prevent it from producing its results. So generating regret for our negative actions, or generating a resolve not to repeat such actions again, is very effective in purifying our negative actions.

When we decide to do any spiritual practice then the lam rim teachings thoroughly and clearly explain just how, and what, we should do. The lam rim teaching is where all aspects and benefits of the practice that you wish to do are clearly explained. If you engage in the practice of making offerings this is clearly explained, likewise with making prostrations, and the four remedial forces of purification. The lam rim teaching is very handy: all that we require is there and readily available. In fact, we have already studied the four doors of moral downfall in the past but Geshe-la thought it important to recall what we have studied in the past, so that we can build upon it and thus further develop our understanding.

We find here a different means of bringing peace and satisfaction to our life. Here the peace and satisfaction we seek is a result of calming our mind, and disciplining our actions through the application of mindfulness, and a sense of moral shame and embarrassment.

Normally we believe that the satisfaction and happiness which we seek results from some outer or material conditions. In experiencing that material pleasure our mind and our actions are completely free from restraint. When our mind is scattered and wandering towards the outside, there is also no restriction on our actions and so we indulge ourselves in a variety of things, finding some satisfaction and enjoyment in this process. The question is at what cost do we find that material pleasure? Generally we have to say that there are many conditions which must come together if we are to experience that material satisfaction, conditions such as finance, or good company or a personal friend. It also depends upon our age as well. If we are not young enough, we are limited in what we can enjoy.

There are so many factors which must come together, that sometimes it is not easy to find outward satisfaction. And, not finding satisfaction can be very frustrating, and so your life becomes meaningless because you can see no type of pleasure or goal apart from material ones.

So it is essential for us to find inner peace and satisfaction by finding the meaning of life within ourself. We can only achieve that understanding if we recognise it, and then through that recognition live our lives accordingly. In one sense all we have to do achieve that understanding is to think "What do I want in life?" Of course what we want is to enjoy good health and mental happiness, and some sort of mental satisfaction throughout our lifespan.

Then we have to investigate the true causes which bring about good mental and physical health. As said before, to find happiness in the mind we all have to look beyond the artificial happiness which results from indulging in outer material objects. Then we would find some peace and satisfaction in the mind. With some sense of peace, stability and happiness in our mind then our life becomes meaningful.

With this state of happiness and ease of the mind, then if you have to do some action, whether for your own goal,

or those of others, you will do so very joyfully. Even, if we do not undertake such actions, then we shall find lasting peace and happiness.

Questions and Answers

What are the two causes of taking refuge? Fear and faith.

There are many types of fear, but here we mean fear of falling into a lower rebirth.

Having experienced this fear we look for how we might be freed from this fear, and we see that the three jewels have the capacity to free one from this fear. So, in this way we generate faith.

What are the types of refuge precepts? There are two:²

1. Common and 2. Specific

³Is the Buddha a sentient being? No.⁴

Are there sentient beings in the pure land of Buddha? Yes.

Do the sentient beings in the pure land have contaminated aggregates? If there are sentient beings who are subject to contaminated aggregates, then how can that land be pure?

There are sentient beings in a pure land but only beings who are there not by force of karma and delusion, but by stainless prayer. Their body cannot be called the truth of suffering.

They have some contamination of their aggregates but not in the sense of contamination by karma and delusion since such aggregates would be truth of suffering. There is no truth of suffering in a pure land. So, these sentient beings have contaminated aggregates, but not in the same sense that ordinary beings have aggregates contaminated by karma and delusion. Most sentient beings in a pure land will attain buddhahood in that one lifetime. However, prior to attaining buddhahood they do have obstructions, either in the form of obstructions to liberation, or obstructions to omniscience which will have to be removed.

Your home work is to learn the seven-fold cause and effect.

Headings with outline numbering are derived from the Text. Headings without outline numbering are derived from Geshe Doga's commentary.

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² For details on these refer to "Liberation in the palm of your hand" pages 424 to 428.

³ Editor: The following was in question and answer format but this had been a confusing interchange, so to clarify matters only Geshe-la's questions and the correct answers have been printed.

⁴ Editor: This was clarified later by discussion with Samdup and by reference to other sources ("Tibetan - English Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology" pages 41 & 441). In this text it states that sentient beings are all beings possessing an ordinary mind, as distinct from Buddha who possesses an enlightened mind. Therefore the Buddha is not a sentient being. Whereas, the term "gang-zag" གང་ཟག་ or in Sanskrit "pugdala" means a person, "I" or living being. Therefore a Buddha is a "gang-zag" but is not a sentient being. Whereas a Hinayana Arhat who has overcome the obstructions to liberation but is yet to overcome the obstructions to omniscience is regarded as a sentient being as well as being a "gang-zag".

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6 May 1997

Reinforce your bodhicitta motivation by thinking that the reason you are listening to these lam rim teachings is to attain full enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. Then, as a cause to achieve enlightenment, cultivate the thought that after listening to these teachings, you will put them into practice as a method of calming the mind.

Preventing the Fourth Moral Downfall of Lack of Conscientiousness

We learnt in last week's teaching that by applying mindfulness, alertness, and a sense of moral shame and embarrassment to our daily practice and actions, we can be sure that no faulty action will occur through that fourth door of moral downfall, the lack of conscientiousness. Before we can integrate them into our practice we need to properly recognise mindfulness, alertness, and sense of moral shame and embarrassment.

1. Mindfulness

Mindfulness, as discussed here, is a tool to help us in our meditation practice. In this context it refers to a special mindfulness which possesses three characteristics. These are:

1. The object of mindfulness
2. The mental attitude of mindfulness
3. The function of mindfulness.

Object: In this context, the object is one with which we are already familiar, i.e. an object which we have known before.

Mental Aspect: Mental aspect is not forgetting that object.

Function: The function of mindfulness is not being distracted, i.e. retaining that aspect of the object, instead of being distracted by the influence of some other object or thought.

Further Elaboration

The reason why the object must be familiar to your mind is because if you are not familiar with it, or if you have no prior knowledge of it, then you cannot recollect it. Therefore to generate this special mindfulness the given object must be **familiar to the mind**, which is the first characteristic.

But even if you have known that object in the past, if you are not holding that object in the mind now, then you cannot generate mindfulness. The given object must be in your mind which is the second characteristic of mindfulness.

This special mindfulness not only recollects the object, but at the same time it causes the mind **to** stay on the object without being distracted or interrupted. This third characteristic, the function of mindfulness, is very important since through it we can develop single-pointed concentration.

2. Alertness

Here alertness, sometimes called introspection, specifically refers to the alertness which is a result of mindfulness.

An example of how alertness arises as an effect of mindfulness, is if you have to look for a particular person in the very busy Victoria Market. In order to find that person you not only need to know their appearance, their skin colour, their size of body, and so forth but also while looking for that person it is very important to have all these details fresh in your mind. Then if you suddenly see that person in front of you, you immediately generate the thought "This is the person I am seeking".

Alertness arises in our mind in the same way as the thought, "This is the person I am seeking". By applying mindfulness not only do you hold the given object in the mind, but you also become more alert. If, as a result of some interference in meditation, you lose the object which is held by mindfulness, you suddenly become alert that a fault has arisen. This alertness arises only as an effect of mindfulness, in the sense that without mindfulness, alertness cannot arise.

Shame and Moral Embarrassment

Shame and moral embarrassment are very helpful in safeguarding our moral practice, and enabling us to avoid immoral actions. In this context the main difference between shame and embarrassment is the fundamental reason why you avoid breaking vows or precepts or committing other immoral actions. Moral shame is when we decide to not commit a non-virtuous or immoral action on the grounds that it will result in a bad reputation or criticism, or even by thinking, "How could I commit such immoral actions because I am Bhikkshu". Thus moral shame is the avoidance of unwholesome actions because of our own self-consciousness.

On the other hand, if you avoid doing such non-virtuous actions on the grounds that it would displease your guru or the three jewels of refuge, then this is moral embarrassment. Thus we avoid immoral action because of the feelings of some person we respect.

So we can see how important it is to have a sense of moral shame and moral embarrassment, because with this sense there will be more restraint in our actions, and without it we may become unscrupulous. It is for this reason that we take spiritual precepts and vows in the presence of holy objects and gurus. Then, having taken these vows we want to avoid moral shame and embarrassment, and will be inspired to think, "Because I have taken these vows from my guru I must be more mindful of keeping them".

The Meaning Of Conscientiousness

The mental factor of conscientiousness prevents delusions from overpowering the mind and it is the cause to exert joyful effort in the practice of developing virtuous qualities.

The three-fold training includes the training of morality whereby one properly keeps all the moral practices including all vows and commitments. This is possible through the application of mindfulness, alertness, conscientiousness, moral shame and embarrassment, and when all of these are applied then your moral practice can be pure. If on the basis of such moral practice we train in concentration and wisdom, then we see the possibility of attaining liberation and freedom from cyclic existence. This method of meditation is the stages of the path common to the middle scope. At this point transformation of the mind to the stages of the path of the great scope commences.

In the lam rim, the teaching on the stages of the path of the small and medium scopes is the preliminary teaching, because the main path to be followed is the stages of the path of the great scope. In order to engage in the mahayana or great stages of the path, one engages in the stages of the small and medium scopes but does not remain content with them. At the same time one sees that this preliminary training in the small and medium stages of the path is essential to complete the great stages of the path.

Meaning of Hinayana and Mahayana

When we refer to small and medium stages of path as the hinayana vehicle, we are talking of the hinayana as the lesser vehicle, and the mahayana as the great vehicle. Thus we should know the difference between these two vehicles.

The literal meaning of vehicle or "yana" (Sanskrit) or in Tibetan "tek-pa", is assuming responsibility for either one's own purpose, or for that of other beings.

We can see the difference between those two vehicles on the grounds of either:

1. the purpose, or the aim, for following either of these two vehicles
2. the result, or fruit, of these two vehicles.

Purpose and Result of Hinayana and Mahayana Paths

1. These two differences explain why the hinayana is explained as the lesser or inferior path compared to the mahayana which is called the great vehicle. In general the follower of the hinayana, or lesser vehicle, is one who has generated renunciation, and who seeks liberation from cyclic existence but merely for one's own sake.

Whereas in the mahayana vehicle the purpose is for the needs of all other sentient beings.

2. Likewise, there is difference in terms of the ultimate fruit of these two vehicles. The ultimate fruit of the hinayana vehicle is liberation from cyclic existence, as a result of just abandoning all mental delusions. Whereas by achieving the ultimate goal of the mahayana path, one attains full enlightenment, free of all faults and limitations of knowledge.

Therefore, from point of view of the purpose of the path, and the result of the path, the hinayana is the lesser vehicle, and the mahayana is the greater vehicle.

Many of you have studied this topic of the difference between the two vehicles in the past. We are studying this topic again, because it is important to refresh what you know, so that it can build onto what you already know.

Test Topic

The compulsory exam topic is the benefits of bodhicitta. There are ten benefits listed in the text, but also add your own thoughts arising from your own experience and contemplation.

Headings with outline numbering are derived from the Text. Headings without outline numbering are derived from Geshe Doga's commentary.

Edit methodology

The initial transcript is prepared from Alan Molloy's notes. These are checked with Damien Busby's notes by Alan Molloy and any differences noted.

Adair Bunnett then compares her notes and the taped recording against the typed transcript and prepares this edited version.

Edited version checked by Alan Molloy

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STUDY GROUP DISCUSSION NIGHT -13 MAY 1997 **Covering discourses 15/04/97 to 06/05/97**

- 1/ Why does the practice of morality lead us to experience true inner peace and satisfaction?
- 2/ What are the lay persons vows? What practice should we engage in if we break any or all of these vows?
- 3/ List the four doors of moral downfalls.
- 4/ Give an example of how we might commit a non-virtuous action by not closing the door of ignorance.
- 5/ To whom should our respect be cultivated in order to close the second door of moral downfalls?
- 6/ "We should not behave like a monkey when engaged in a war with birds." Discuss the meaning of this analogy while referring to our practice of Dharma.
- 7/ What is the best way to challenge our delusions? What are the remedies to attachment and pride?
- 8/ Mindfulness, alertness, a sense of moral shame and moral embarrassment are essential in safeguarding our practice of morality.

What are the three characteristics of the special mindfulness needed in meditation?
Give an example of how alertness arises as a result of mindfulness.
What is the difference between moral shame and moral embarrassment?
- 9/ On what basis do Hinayana and Mahayana differ?

Compulsory question

- 10/ List some of the benefits of Bodhicitta mentioned in the Lam Rim and from your own experience.

GROUP 4

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STUDY GROUP TEST-2

20th May, 1997

Answer any **four** from questions no. 1-6
Question.no.7 is compulsory
Time allowed one hour

1. Why is the practice of morality a basis for inner peace and happiness?
2. a)What are the lay persons vows?
b)Name the six types of holders of lay persons vows.
3. What are the four doors of moral downfalls?
4. Describe mindfulness with three characteristics.
5. On what basis do hinayana and mahayana differ?
6. Explain the door of ignorance as the source of negative actions.
7. **(Compulsory)**

List some of the benefits of bodhicitta mentioned in the lamrim, and from your own experience.