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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ཅུ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅུངས།



8 July 1997

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Please come out of your meditative equipoise.

The only beings who can preach dharma while in meditative equipoise are fully enlightened beings - such as a buddha. If you are not a fully enlightened being, you cannot sit in meditative equipoise and give teachings, or listen to them.

As you all have some knowledge of the bodhicitta mind, you should use this knowledge in your practice as much as possible. It is very important to use bodhicitta as the motivation for any practice in which you engage. Somehow you have to cause your mind to concentrate on the topics of the dharma teachings. That is why it is important to spend some time mentally preparing oneself before any practice.

## **Observing the Benefits of Dharma Practice to our Current Life**

Becoming more familiar with spiritual practice and with the virtuous, or wholesome states of mind is all a matter of how much training we give to our mind. That is why it is very important to always examine one's mindstream on a daily, or consistent basis. Since you have already gained some dharma knowledge, you get some idea of what is best for yourself, and your mind, when you examine your mindstream.

We all want our mind to be very stable and calm, not only now, but at the time of death we wish to die with that calm state of mind. Therefore we have to realise that the only way to gain such a virtuous state of mind is by training our mind - by getting oneself used to spiritual practice as much as possible. If we do this, we can then see our progress in terms of our familiarity with virtuous practice.

If you continue to regularly practise training your mind in virtue, by engaging in meditation on a regular basis for a period of time, (e.g. an hour, or less if this is too long) then as the years pass you will see how much progress you have made. As you make progress then the practice becomes very easy, and a very natural thing to do. This means that even at the time of death when you is very mentally and physically weak, you are still mentally able to undertake virtuous practice.

## **The Benefits of Dharma Practice in this Life**

We should always be convinced that the dharma practice we do has some real meaning for both this life and future lives, because we shall then take that practice to heart.

It is very obvious how dharma practice benefits one in this life. What we all wish for in this life - physical and mental happiness - is not something obtainable just through some material or outer conditions. We might

think that physical or material happiness can be found by always keeping ourselves busy with work. But we cannot find it there. It depends on our mental attitude, or way of thinking, as well as the outer conditions. We can understand this fact very clearly if we examine our own day-to-day experience of pain, pleasure, ease or unease. If we examine the causes and conditions of these experiences of like and dislike, we see that the conditions are not only outer ones. There is also an inner factor. What is that inner factor? If we examine our mind, it is a negative way of thinking, or negative habits or influences in our mind.

In this way we see that all our experiences are the outcome of our attitude. We have to see how the dharma practice which we do assists our life. It should add to our life. We should know that even in this immediate lifetime, without the assistance of the very virtuous, sustaining dharma state of mind, it is impossible to find lasting peace and happiness in the mind, by just relying on outer conditions.

## **The Levels of Happiness**

It is possible to seek various levels of happiness or pleasure in this life. The best is to seek the happiness which is lasting, and experienced at a deeper level.

What is happiness or pleasure to most ordinary people? The happiness and pleasure they experience is mere conditions. They experience it either when their mind is overpowered, or influenced by distractions such as mental fantasies, or something physical like a social indulgence. We have to realise that there is happiness beyond these mental fantasies and social indulgences.

We need deeper happiness because this very gross happiness which most people seek is very unstable and can disappear like a rainbow. As we grow older, attaining more than sixty or seventy years of age, it is very difficult to experience such gross happiness. We see many people who are well off, but who still live a very unhappy and very miserable life. We see very old people who, despite having achieved much in life, see their life as empty and who experience only grief.

For people whose only conception of pleasure is gross material pleasure, there is no happiness when they are deprived of this pleasure, and then their life has no meaning. So it is very wise to think of seeking happiness and self satisfaction independently through self contentment, spiritual practice, and meditation rather than depending upon material conditions, or mental distractions. Mental distractions or fantasies can

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sometimes bring good experiences, but overall they are the cause of more suffering and confusion in the mind.

### **The Importance of Practising Now**

It is important to do more practice of dharma when we are young and very fit. We should try to balance our life at that age, rather than just wasting all our time in material pursuits. Of course it is important to earn money, but at the same time we should try to use some of our time for spiritual practice, and go beyond seeking just material pleasure. If we train like this, then in the latter period of life we shall be very secure, both materially and spiritually.

In short if we simply examine our own life, and the lives of others - old and young, rich and poor - we can gain some knowledge of what is best to do now, and how to avoid suffering in the future.

We have to take full responsibility for our spiritual practice ourselves, and we have to see that practice as a means of enriching ourselves with an inner wealth. Just as we must work hard to gain outer wealth, it is our responsibility to accumulate inner wealth through spiritual practice. As mentioned earlier, for many of us it is very unrealistic to completely follow the spiritual path - in other words to completely renounce the comforts of the world. In our era it is very difficult to completely renounce the world. It is not like in the past, where many practitioners renounced worldly pleasures, and followed the spiritual path without any belongings or any good material comforts. It is more practical for us to think, "I shall make sure that I am not short of both material wealth and spiritual wealth. I shall try to achieve both goals."

As is always said when making any effort to achieve spiritual goals, what is most important is not learning, but integrating the dharma into our mind and our actions. In essence dharma practice is to benefit other beings. So we have to recognise the real spiritual practice that we do. Real spiritual practice which benefits other beings - especially our parents, the sick or the very old - has the greatest benefit. Then there is some connection between the practice we do, which is to serve and benefit others, and our own life.

### **Learning from our Elders**

We have to see that at a young age we are just observing, whereas the elderly are busy being observed. In truth, however, one day we shall also grow older, and in turn be observed, and we ourselves shall go to a nursing home [the places where the very elderly people live]. If we see suffering in this world, there is no guarantee that we shall not experience that same suffering in the future.

So in this way we relate everything in our life to our practice to gain a fuller understanding. Through benefiting others we can create harmony, which becomes a source of joy for ourselves and others. Harmony is very important for both the young and the old, for children and parents. Harmony is an interdependent quality, it cannot exist in isolation. Through serving and respecting their parents, children give so much support and joy to them. Likewise children and young people generally can learn so much about life from their elders.

Geshela says that when he is asked about seeking a livelihood, and how to live life, he replies "Seek this

advice from your parents". Of course some older people look down on and ignore younger people, and that creates problems, but generally it is true that elderly people have more real experience of life. There is a lot of knowledge to be gained from elderly people. In this way you can respect them and hold them in high regard.

Geshela said that he meant to continue on the benefits of bodhicitta tonight. What he has just taught indicates the ways in which the teachings can be expanded into all aspects of life, and have many levels at which they can be understood.

### **Discussion**

Geshe-la: Name the seven fold instruction of cause and effect to generate bodhicitta.

Students: Recognising all beings as your mother, Remembering the kindness of all beings, Repaying the kindness, Love, Compassion, Superior Intention, and Bodhicitta.

Geshe-la: What is the meditation before seven-fold cause and effect?

Student: Equanimity

Geshe-la: What is the meaning of equanimity in that context?

The equanimity which is the immeasurable equanimity has two types, depending on the focus of the equanimity: Where the focus is upon oneself, wishing to attain this mind of equanimity

Where the focus is upon others, wishing them to have the mind of equanimity.

On which of these two do we focus before the seven fold cause and effect meditation?

It is the first one. Before the seven-fold cause and effect meditation on bodhicitta, we generate a personal equanimity. Prior to the seven-fold cause and effect meditation you must level your mind by completely removing all thoughts of holding some close, and feeling aversion or distance to others. This completely equalises our attitude to all beings, and we hold the same attitude to all. If our mind is not level like this, it is impossible to later cultivate what is called impartial love and compassion.

The equanimity in the Four Immeasurables focuses upon others developing the mind of equanimity. This is a meditation we do wishing to level the mind of all other beings, so that they have no attachment and aversion to others.

If we apply the same way of thinking we can see that whenever we enjoy food or drink, we transform that moment into a spiritual practice - as a cause to inspire us to practise more dharma. Likewise the experience of some difficulty is also a reminder of dharma, because if we realise that these unwanted experiences are the outcome of our negative actions, we shall cultivate the motivation of not creating further negative actions.

It is in this way that you develop your meditations on the law of karma, or the law of cause and effect. Making progress in your knowledge of the law of karma, means contemplating the various life experiences, looking at their cause and effect, and thereby cultivating the thought of doing what is to be done, and avoiding what is to be avoided.

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15 July 1997

Begin by establishing the bodhicitta motivation; the genuine thought of achieving buddhahood to benefit all beings. We should think that it is to fulfil this ultimate spiritual goal that we study and practise the stages of the path; and that is also why we are training, or calming our mind.

## 422.317 You will Fulfil all your Wishes Effortlessly

ཅེ་བམམ་པ་འགྲུབ་པ།

We are now up to the seventh benefit of bodhicitta which is that you will fulfil all your wishes effortlessly.

We have immediate short term wishes and goals, as well as long term ones. If we cultivate bodhicitta, all these wishes will be fulfilled effortlessly, almost spontaneously.

How does bodhicitta fulfil all one's wishes? As well as actual bodhicitta, even the cause of bodhicitta, which is love, compassion, and the thought of benefiting other beings, can also fulfil all one's wishes. Having cultivated love and compassion you are always motivated to undertake wholesome or virtuous actions, such as the ten virtuous actions. With love and compassion, and the thought of other beings, you will refrain from causing death because of hatred or anger, and you will refrain from stealing as a result of miserliness.

Through the influence of love and compassion you behave in a positive, beneficial way, rather than engaging in harmful actions. As a benefit of behaving morally, such as by not committing any of the ten non-virtuous actions, you will obtain a better rebirth in future, as a human or godly being. Such good rebirths are the immediate, or short-term goal of this life, and love and compassion are causes to achieve such a higher rebirth, as well as achieving other short term goals such as material wealth, or a sound healthy body.

The bodhicitta mind is essential for the attainment of the ultimate goal - the supreme goal of eliminating unwanted sufferings and misery of all living beings, so that they achieve their desire, happiness.

Contemplating the effect on your actions of this genuine bodhicitta mind, as well as the effect of having love and compassion for other beings, gives a clear notion that love, compassion and bodhicitta can indeed fulfil all one's wishes.

Shantideva's *Bodhisattva's Way Of Life* says, "With this bodhicitta mind, then you create a cause of happiness for an immeasurable number of other beings."

We should integrate this benefit of bodhicitta into our heart, and into our daily practice. Bodhicitta is a very powerful mind in terms of fulfilling all that we want, and eliminating all that we do not want. It is said that the power of prayers, or very thoughtful words of truth, depends upon the person who speaks or prays. If the speaker is someone of enormous merit, or one who possesses the bodhicitta mind, then their prayers will be effective.

Many of us do the Tara puja often, and we all consider ourselves to be spiritual practitioners. So it is very important for us to know the essential elements of the beginning of our practice, during the middle or the actual session, and at the end. There is nothing more important than the bodhicitta mind, with which we seek to benefit all sentient beings.

If we are doing the Tara puja for a specific person, then at the start of the practice we think of their pain, for which they have aversion and want to be rid of. In this way we generate the motivation that the practice we do is to benefit that person. The reason you pray to Tara or seek her blessings is also to benefit all beings. In the middle, or during the actual session do not forget the purpose of your practice - it is important to maintain your mental focus. At the end of your session try to sustain the bodhicitta in your mind. This means trying to diminish the self-cherishing mind as much as possible, whilst increasing the thought of cherishing other beings. So, you direct your focus onto the bodhicitta mind. At the end of the practice, dedicate it to benefit the specific person, so that they make a swift recovery. You have to see that your daily practice, and the prayers you do, can be more fruitful and beneficial if you incorporate bodhicitta into your motivation for the practice.

Even our own present life is an extremely fortunate one, and very special if we think of practising the bodhicitta mind. With the mind of bodhicitta, within a very short period of time, even less than one minute, we can accumulate enormous merit and remove enormous obscurations. Take for example, properly circumambulating a stupa, such as the one in Tara Institute's front hall, with the mind of bodhicitta. As discussed in the past, you do this by imagining that all the other sentient beings in human form are following you. Then think of rays of light emanating from the Buddha in the centre of the stupa, inviting all the infinite buddhas and bodhisattvas to dissolve into Buddha in the stupa. From that Buddha, rays of light then shine forth to you and all sentient beings. Imagine that through

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these rays of light you receive immense blessings from all the buddhas, and the purification of all your negative obscurations, as well as those of all other sentient beings. With such a practice of circumambulation you can create enormous merit, and remove as many obstacles as there are sentient beings. From this point of view, the life which we enjoy now has the potential to accumulate merit, and to remove negativities and obscurations, even in a very short period of time. From this perspective, the life with such enormous potential that we have now, is one that we have never obtained in the past.

You may have heard the story of the pig which was being chased by a dog, and which ran around a stupa by accident. The result was that the merit which the pig created was such that it was born in the land of thirty three gods, the land of the godly beings. Imagine! If we do circumambulations with the proper motivation, the benefit would be far greater than that.

For those who live a very busy life, it is especially important to know how to accumulate merit and purify negativities just through such daily actions as walking or sitting. Then whenever we do those everyday actions, they create merit and purify negativities.

We should try to see all the goodness which we enjoy in life, such as good food and drink, as being the result or fruit of merit which we have created in past. With such an awareness, then we are inspired to create even more merit, by creating more positive actions or virtue.

We have to see that whatever we do gives us an opportunity to practise, and become a reflection of dharma. All the goodness can be seen as a blessing which we receive from the guru Buddha. It is through the kindness of the guru Buddha that we have such a wonderful life. In this way, we can expand the scope of our practice to include everyday actions.

Geshe Doga recommends using the Foundation of All Good Qualities prayer to begin lam rim meditations. It is best to learn it by heart, because that makes it easier in meditation. You can just say it from memory, then contemplate its meaning. The last verse is very good to use as a dedication prayer for any practice that you do.

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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**

The original typescript is prepared by Jenny Molloy from Alan Molloy's original transcript, which has been checked against Damien Busby's notes. Adair Bunnett then checks the typescript against a tape recording, and edits the text, which is finally checked by Alan Molloy.

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23 July 1997

Ensure that you have the correct motivation.

## 422.318 You will not receive any harm or hindrances

གོམ་པ་དང་བར་ཚད་ཀྱིས་མི་ཚུགས་པ།

The eighth benefit of bodhicitta is that you will not receive any harm or any hindrances.

With a bodhicitta mind you always show kindness and love, rather than having any harmful thoughts towards other beings. Therefore you do not receive harm from non-human beings such as spirits, some of whom read minds, and see into the future. They can see that you have bodhicitta, and so they do not dare to harm you, because there is no reason to do so. With human beings, if our mind becomes abnormal or disordered we might want to cause harm to others. Usually however, we cannot bear to harm those who benefit, support, or show love to us.

As a benefit of bodhicitta we shall not face any spiritual hindrances which might prevent us from achieving our spiritual goal. Bodhicitta also frees us from hindrances in our life, such as those limiting our lifespan, or those hindrances we face in work, or any of the other tasks which we undertake. If we generate bodhicitta in our mind, we can overcome all these harms and hindrances.

There are stories in the text that explain more about this eighth benefit. Also remember how the Lord Buddha conquered the forces of evil through his deep single-pointed meditation on loving kindness for those other beings. This eighth benefit of bodhicitta shows us that when we face harms and hindrances in life, then we should meditate on loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta, in order to overcome and counter them.

Of course there are times when we find ourselves very mentally and emotionally disturbed, but without any specific reason or cause we can pinpoint. Some people actually believe that this is because some evil spirit is possessing them, and of course this is possible. However when we do undergo such internal disturbance, the best thing to do is to meditate, and realise that rather than focussing on worrying about oneself, this is the time to apply spiritual knowledge.

In these circumstances it would be very beneficial to cultivate compassion towards other beings: a compassion based upon a personal experience of pain and suffering and their effects. Then instead of focusing upon your own suffering, you reflect that other beings undergo far greater suffering than yours. So you say to yourself "By accepting and enduring this suffering which

I now undergo, may all sentient beings be free of suffering. May this suffering which I now undergo become a cause to free others from their suffering". Rather than letting this painful experience bother you continuously, you are doing something to overcome it.

Any unwanted problem in life can be so grave that if we do not do something about it, we might end up taking our own life. This illustrates the depth of suffering that a living being can undergo. By understanding the level of suffering others experience, we can see how selfish it is to be only concerned with personal suffering.

We can observe how even very vicious animals, such as lions, respond to anyone who always shows them great love and affection. Geshe-la says that he saw a program on television about tigers who developed a close, intimate bond with humans who have always shown much affection to them, and how they trust those humans. This shows us the benefits we give to others when we show them love and compassion.

Even with animal training, we can see that there is a difference between animals trained with real love, care and friendship, and those animals trained by force and violence. Those trained using the peaceful means of human love and compassion perform willingly, with no sign of fear or nervousness. Whereas animals trained by force perform unwillingly, out of fear, and may even show signs of violence towards their trainer. If showing love and compassion has such an effect on animals, then it will have a far greater effect on human beings. The benefits and the appreciation that we receive from others will be greater.

## 422.319 Quickly completing the spiritual grounds and paths

ས་ལམ་བློ་མཐོ་ཅད་ལྷུ་རྟུ་རྩེ་གསུམ་པ།

The ninth benefit of bodhicitta is to quickly complete the spiritual grounds, or quickly complete all the stages of the path.

Achieving the state of buddhahood, or full state of enlightenment, depends upon completing the two accumulations of merit and wisdom. With the full accumulation of merit and wisdom, then both types of obstructions will be fully abandoned, together with their latencies. Without bodhicitta we cannot complete these two accumulations. In fact it is said that bodhicitta is the main cause to complete these two accumulations, and to reach the state of buddhahood. The hearers and solitary realisers of the lesser vehicle have employed the wisdom

realising emptiness, or ultimate truth, but because the lesser vehicle lacks the method of bodhicitta, the hearers and solitary realisers can only reach the end result of liberation from cyclic existence, and not the full state of enlightenment, or buddhahood.

This shows how, unlike the lesser vehicle which employs the wisdom realising emptiness, the follower of the greater vehicle, employs the methods of both bodhicitta and the wisdom realising emptiness, which then leads to a state of buddhahood and the abandonment of both types of obscurations.

Without cultivating bodhicitta you cannot even enter the first mahayana path of accumulation. Without bodhicitta you cannot achieve buddhahood, even if you follow the secret mantra path. Even the greatness of the secret mantra path, which can lead one to buddhahood within a single lifetime, relies upon bodhicitta mind.

If we relate this to our practice, we have to realise that we must practise bodhicitta. We all want to be perfect beings, having as few faults as possible, and possessing as many good qualities as possible. We have to realise that the true cause to achieve this state is the cultivation of bodhicitta. Whatever form of practice we do, even if it is just feeding a bird, if it is conjoined with the bodhicitta motivation, then all our practices will become a cause to achieve the state of buddhahood.

Bodhicitta is the catalyst which transforms all our virtuous spiritual practices such as generosity, morality, patience, or the ten wholesome actions, into a pure cause of attaining buddhahood. From this point of view it is said bodhicitta is a cause to quickly attain buddhahood.

#### 422.320 You become the source of joy and happiness for all beings

འགྲོ་བའི་བདེ་སྲིད་མ་ལུས་པ་འབྱུང་བའི་ཞིང་མར་འགྱུར་བ།

The tenth benefit of bodhicitta is that you become the source of joy and happiness for all beings. This is clarified by the quotation "The hearers and solitary realisers are born from buddhas, and buddhas are born from bodhisattvas."<sup>1</sup>

Bodhicitta is like a very fertile field, which gives joy and happiness to all beings. If you can, please study the commentary in the text.

#### Visualisation while reciting the Twenty-one Taras' prayer

When doing the Twenty-one Taras' prayer we are offering praise to the twenty-one Taras and the prayer is known as the *Twenty-one Praises to Tara*. As you recite each praise it is good to visualise receiving the blessings, and then dissolving that particular Tara into yourself.

#### The meaning of the refuge prayer

In the last test there was a question on the refuge and generating bodhicitta prayer.

The first two lines say, "I go for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha until I achieve buddhahood".

In these lines one takes refuge in the three jewels in accordance with the mahayana tradition. This includes the meaning of:

1. The causes for going to refuge
2. The objects of going for refuge
3. The manner of going for refuge
4. The duration or length of time for going for refuge

#### There are three causes of going for refuge:

1. The **fear** of undergoing the suffering of cyclic existence in general, and the suffering of the lower realms in particular.
2. Having whole hearted **faith** that the three jewels give full protection from this fear.
3. **Compassion** for all other beings including oneself.

#### In the Mahayana tradition the three objects of refuge are:

1. The Mahayana refuge object of Buddha is the same refuge object as for the lesser vehicle.
2. The Mahayana refuge object of the law of Dharma is the quality of the Mahayana truth of cessation the Mahayana truth of the path to that cessation.
3. The Mahayana refuge objects of Sangha refers to the superior beings of the Mahayana path.

#### Manner of going for refuge:

If we study the words of this prayer, it indicates that the one who goes for refuge is "I", and "go for refuge" refers to the manner of going for refuge.

If you go for refuge to the three jewels in terms of causal refuge objects, they are:

1. Buddha as the perfect teacher
2. Dharma, or Buddha's doctrine as the true refuge or protection for yourself
3. Sangha is the true spiritual friend, companion or assistant.

If the three objects of refuge are a resultant refuge object, then these three are the ultimate future goals that you wish to achieve.

#### Duration or length of time of going for refuge:

The phrase "until I achieve enlightenment" indicates the duration for which one goes for refuge, which is until you achieve buddhahood or enlightenment.

The meaning of the generation and practice of bodhicitta prayer:

The next two lines in the prayer are, "Through the virtuous actions that I accumulate by practising giving and so forth, may I achieve buddhahood to benefit all sentient beings".

The term 'bodhicitta' is indicated by the aspiration "May I achieve buddhahood to benefit all sentient beings".

The meaning of "through the virtuous action (or merit) I accumulate by giving, and so forth" is quite self explanatory. The words "by giving, and so forth" indicate the deeds which you have created, which are like a substance. The reason you create these actions is "to benefit all sentient beings".

"May I achieve buddhahood", is the goal that you wish to achieve, in order to fulfil the stated purpose which is "to benefit all sentient beings".

<sup>1</sup> Madhyamika Avatara by Chandrakirti, verse one, chapter one.

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29 July 1997

Let us generate the bodhicitta motivation of wishing to achieve full enlightenment for the sake of all beings. With this motivation we know why we are studying and practising the stages of the path to enlightenment.

### 422.3110 You become the source of joy and happiness for all beings (cont'd)

In the last teaching we heard this quotation from Chandrakirti's *Supplement to the Middle Way*:

"Hearers and solitary realisers are born from buddhas, buddhas are born from bodhisattvas."

This explains how bodhicitta is the source of happiness for all beings. What we understand from the above quotation is that hearers and solitary realisers are born from buddhas. How are hearers and solitary realisers born from buddhas? They are born through following the teachings of the buddhas.

If we regard bodhisattvas and buddhas as being of the same continuum, then "Buddhas are born from bodhisattvas", means that since the buddha to whom we are referring was once a bodhisattva, buddhas and bodhisattvas are of the same continuum. If we regard buddhas and bodhisattvas as being a separate continuum, the quotation "Buddhas are born from bodhisattvas" means that the buddhas are born as a consequence of relying upon bodhisattva spiritual teachers in the past.

From where are bodhisattvas born? They are born from bodhicitta, so from this point of view bodhicitta is the source of all happiness.

If a person becomes qualified as a bodhisattva at the moment that bodhicitta is generated, then we must ask how can bodhisattvas be born from bodhicitta? Genuine bodhicitta cannot be an actual cause to a bodhisattva, since they occur simultaneously. Thus the bodhicitta which is a cause for, and which gives birth to a bodhisattva is not a genuine bodhicitta, but it is a fabricated bodhicitta. Although it is fabricated, it is a bodhicitta which is very close to being genuine bodhicitta.

If we train ourselves in cultivating bodhicitta, such as by following the seven-fold cause and effect, we make gradual progress towards developing a fabricated bodhicitta, and eventually genuine bodhicitta arises. When genuine bodhicitta arises we are called a bodhisattva, and as a bodhisattva we continue training in the spiritual path. When you complete this spiritual path

you are called a buddha.

In terms of our own progress towards the state of buddhahood, we see how we develop from the state of being a bodhisattva to becoming a buddha. So the bodhisattva gives rise to buddhas: buddhas are born from bodhisattvas. As bodhisattvas we must follow the spiritual path which is the main cause to achieve buddhahood.

### Further benefits of bodhicitta

Bodhicitta is the essence, or heart practice, of all the teachings of all the buddhas. It is the essence of the entire teaching on the lam rim. It is the source of excellent qualities and goodness for oneself, and all other beings.

Bodhicitta is like the one medicine which can cure all the diseases of cyclic existence and self liberation. Bodhicitta is regarded by holy bodhisattvas and noble beings as the most essential practice, which they hold in their heart. Bodhicitta is the seed for achieving all the qualities of the state of buddhahood.

Realising all these benefits of bodhicitta, how great it would be if we could generate such bodhicitta in our mind. We are very fortunate that we have this opportunity to study and discuss bodhicitta. As we learn more about the benefits of bodhicitta, we should try to develop the strong motivation to generate such a precious bodhicitta mind in this lifetime.

### 422.32 The way to develop bodhicitta

བྱུང་ཚུབ་ཏུ་སེམས་བསྐྱེད་པའི་ཚུལ་།

The next major heading, How To Cultivate Bodhicitta, has two sub-headings:

#### 422.321 The actual stages in training in bodhicitta

བྱུང་ཚུབ་ཏུ་སེམས་བསྐྱེད་པའི་རིམ་པ་དངོས།

#### 422.322 How to hold aspiring bodhicitta through a ritual formula

སེམས་བསྐྱེད་ཚོགས་གཟུང་པའི་ཚུལ་།

#### 422.321 The actual stages of cultivating bodhicitta

བྱུང་ཚུབ་ཏུ་སེམས་བསྐྱེད་པའི་རིམ་པ་དངོས།

This has two main methods:

##### 422.321.1 Instruction of seven-fold cause and effect

རྒྱ་འབྲས་མན་ངག་བདུན་གྱི་སྐོར་སྟོན་བྱུང་བ།

## 422.321.2 Instruction of equalising and exchanging self with others

བདག་གཞན་མཉམ་བཞེད་སྒོ་ནས་སྒྲིམ་བཤམ་གྱི་སྒྲུབ་བྱ།

## 422.321.1 Instruction Of Seven-Fold Cause And Effect

རྒྱ་འབྲས་མན་ངག་བདུན་གྱི་སྒོ་ནས་སྒྲིམ་བཤམ་གྱི་སྒྲུབ་བྱ།

The main sutra source for this is the *Perfection of Wisdom* sutra. One of the main scriptural sources of early commentaries to this sutra is Maitreya's text *Ornament To Clear Realisations*. However *Liberation In The Palm Of Your Hand* indicates that texts by Chandrakirti, Chandrogomin and others are also scriptural sources for this instruction.

There are two main sutra sources on equalising and exchanging self for others. They are: Do-po köd-<sup>pa</sup> and Do phal cher (which is a collection of six sutras).<sup>1</sup> The instructions and commentaries on equalising and exchanging self for others include Aryadeva's *Four Hundred Verses* and Shantideva's *Bodhisattva Charyavata*. The scriptural source for condensed instructions are Kamalashila's *Stages of Meditation*, and Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland*.

Both these instructions on generating bodhicitta have their original source in the Buddha. From Buddha the lineage of instruction of seven-fold cause and effect is Maitreya to Asanga and so forth. The lineage of exchange of self for others is Buddha to Manjushri to Nagarjuna to Shantideva.

At a later date Atisha received the lineage of both instructions from his teacher Lama Serlingpa who lived in Baraputra, which is part of Indonesia. Later on Lama Tsong Khapa combined both lineages of instruction so that they can be practised at the same time. Prior to that the lineages of instruction were practised separately as a means of generating bodhicitta. If we follow Lama Tsong Khapa's instruction, then we practise both instructions together. However they are explained separately.

The seven-fold cause and effect method of training the mind is:

1. Remembering all other beings as one's mother
2. Remembering their kindness
3. Repaying their kindness
4. Loving kindness
5. Compassion
6. Superior intention
7. Bodhicitta

It is said that this instruction of meditating on immeasurable equanimity prior to the seven-fold cause and effect is the unique instruction of Lama Tsong Khapa. Having first meditated well on immeasurable equanimity, it is then much easier to later meditate on impartial, immeasurable loving kindness and compassion.

Whereas the meditation on immeasurable equanimity in the context of the four immeasurables is an instruction that comes from the famous yogi Gyalwa Ensapa, who was renowned for being able to achieve the state of

buddhahood in one lifetime. In the six session yoga of the four immeasurables, immeasurable equanimity comes first.

Discussion night:

Next week is discussion night Use the past teachings as topics for discussion.

The compulsory examination question will be:

Explain the four means of gathering disciples.

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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

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

Adair Bunnett then compared Allys Andrews' notes against the transcript, and prepared this edited version.

Edited version checked by Alan Molloy.

<sup>1</sup> *Tibetan Tradition Of Mental Development*, p. 119



TARA INSTITUTE  
STUDY GROUP DISCUSSION NIGHT -5 August 1997  
Covering discourses 08/07/97 to 29/07/97

- 1/ Discuss why it is important for us to make efforts to develop both materially and spiritually, especially when we are young and healthy?
- 2/ Discuss how cultivating Bodhicitta and its main cause, Love and Compassion, can fulfil all of our short and long term goals.
- 3/ Describe how we can integrate the Bodhicitta mind into the beginning, middle and end of our spiritual practice?
- 4/ Discuss the meaning of the 8th benefit, ie. Bodhicitta can protect us from receiving harm and hindrances in our spiritual practice.
- 5/ Discuss the benefits of skilfully dealing with our own problems by turning our attention to the sufferings of other sentient beings and cultivating love and compassion, thereby counteracting our self cherishing mind.
- 6/ With reference to the verse from Chandrakirti's Supplement to the Middle Way

"Hearers and Middling Realisers of Suchness  
Are born from the Kings of Subduers (Buddhas),  
Buddhas are born from Bodhisattvas,  
The mind of compassion, non dual understanding  
and the altruistic mind of enlightenment  
Are causes of Children of the Conquerors"

discuss how Bodhicitta is the source of all joy and happiness.

- 7/ What are the two main methods and lineages of generating Bodhicitta?
- 8/ List the stages in training in the seven fold cause and effect technique.

Compulsory question

- 9/ Explain the meaning of each of the four means of gathering disciples.

YOU ARE IN GROUP remote

# TARA INSTITUTE

## STUDY GROUP TEST-4

12th August, 1997

Answer any four from question.no. 1-6  
Question.no.7 is Compulsory

Time allowed one hour

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1. Describe how can we integrate the bodhicitta mind into the beginning, middle and end of our spiritual practice?
2. Discuss the meaning of the 8th benefit, ie. bodhicitta can protect us from receiving harms and hindrances.
3. Explain how bodhicitta is the source of all joy and happiness.
4. What are the two main lineages of instruction to generate bodhicitta?
5. List the stages in training in the seven fold cause and effect technique.
6. Define bodhicitta.
7. **(Compulsory)**

Explain the meaning of the four means of gathering disciples.