

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་བཅུངས།



11 November 1997

As usual you should generate the motivation of listening to these profound teachings on the lam rim, which is to achieve the highest spiritual goal for all beings. In order to achieve this ultimate and highest goal you are listening to these teachings, so as to practise them.

422.321.124 The Fourth Cause: Loving kindness

ཡིད་འོང་གི་བྱུངས་པ།

Of the seven-fold cause and effect to generate bodhicitta we now discuss loving kindness. Loving kindness refers to the kind of love which has a specific mental attitude. It is said that the loving kindness which is generated as part of the seven-fold cause and effect is a cause which produces great compassion. This distinguishes it from general love which is not necessarily a cause for compassion, because, generally speaking, there is no order as to whether love or compassion will arise first.

Here love is the feeling one naturally has towards all beings as a successful result of the preceding meditative practices, beginning with equanimity, then remembering all sentient beings as one's mother, then remembering their kindness, and then wishing to repay that kindness. Having done all those preceding meditations very successfully, it is said that this feeling of loving kindness will then arise spontaneously. It is similar to the close, intimate and pleasant feeling you have towards your mother, for whom you feel much gratitude and love. This feeling of loving kindness arises as a result of your previous meditations, where the object is all sentient beings rather than any specific object.

The best way to describe this loving kindness is as the famous Geshe Potawa said to an old mother who asked him, "What is love?" He replied "It is precisely the very special, loving affection and feeling that you have for your child". This loving kindness is the same love that a mother has for her beloved child,

How Is This Loving Kindness Different To General Love?

We should know the slight distinction between the kind of love which is generated as part of the seven-fold cause and effect, and the meaning of general love.

Generally love refers to a mental attitude which wishes other beings to experience happiness, and joy. One can cultivate the wish for others to have happiness, thinking, "how wonderful if they had such happiness". We generate such a wish when we see others lacking such happiness and joy. This is the general meaning of love. What is most important here is that we fill our whole

mind, and inner continuum with loving kindness towards others.

Benefits Of Love

Knowing this general meaning of love we then ask ourselves "Do we possess such love in us?" Of course we do, but it is not enough and not perfect. Before we can generate a strong and genuine motivation to develop more love towards other beings we have to know the benefits of developing more love.

To see the true benefits of love it is best to see the benefits of showing love towards those who are close to one. By showing true love to them we can see the way they benefit, and the effect of this love which gives them support, and helps them. If you support those beings who are close, then what sort of effect does that have upon your own life and your relationships with them, and what is the effect of that love upon your own mindstream? If we consider all this, then we can see that the benefit of love is not just that through our mental attitude and good actions, we cause happiness to others, but we also find more peace, fulfilment and satisfaction within ourself.

If developing more love has such benefits and advantages to us and to others in our life, then what is preventing us from utilising the potential within us through which we can show more love towards others? We have the potential to fully develop this love within us, but because of the obstacles posed by opponent states of mind, we cannot make whatever potential of love we possess visible to other beings, especially to those closest and dearest to us. Then it becomes very difficult to gain love, trust and friendship from others.

Therefore, we should understand that to develop love we need to put a lot of effort into our meditations, thinking of the benefits of generating love, how to generate that love, and to whom we should show that love. It depends upon our effort in understanding the meaning of love, and our efforts in doing the meditation.

The Difference Between Love And Attachment

It is very important to be able to discriminate between love and all other types of mental attitudes such as attachment. With the correct knowledge of this difference, then one should be able to see whether one appears to others as showing love for them, or as showing attachment to them. With the correct discriminating knowledge of the difference between love and attachment you should also be able to observe others who are close to you, to determine whether they are showing you attachment or love. If they show

attachment you need not necessarily like that person, but at least you realise that you should not trust them as a lasting friend. So too, we are also judged by our friends depending on whether we are showing love or attachment to them. If they judge that we are showing more attachment to them, then in their judgement we are a selfish person with no concern or care for them. If they see us in this way it is an obstacle in our relationship. Whereas if we show more love to others then there is naturally more mutual care and benefit in that relationship.

Therefore, a discriminating knowledge or wisdom has a very important role in terms of guiding the mental attitude we should project towards others. If we project more desire and attachment, then the consequence will be more disadvantages and loss to both our own and others' lives. Even in terms of this very lifetime, we can see how many times we have become the victim of our own attachment to others, as well as the number of times we have become the victim of the attachment of others, which we have misinterpreted as love.

One very apparent difference between love and attachment is the different feelings we have for our kind parents and towards our partner or boyfriend or girlfriend. With a parent there is very great love, and an intimate bond with an automatic care and concern for them. Anytime they have problems or pain, you immediately wish them to not have that pain. That is love.

We need to develop this same attitude towards our partners and friends. Why? Because having a relationship is a very important factor in a stable and happy life. In other words, the major cause of the unending difficulties which we face has nothing to do with material things such as lacking food or drink, or clothing, or a place to live. It is mostly related to the lack of stability in our relationships, or because we have been deceived in our relationships.

Thus there is great benefit if, right from the beginning of a relationship, we always try to see that the most important cause is love, which we have to show to any person we like, and which we expect them to show to us. This depends upon having the correct discriminating knowledge as to what is love and what is attachment.

One should learn the teachings from the texts, but it is more important to relate it all to one's own life, trying to see the benefits and apply them in practice. As we learn of the great many benefits of universal love and compassion, what we really need to know is that the love or compassion which we have within us is very precious, and it needs to be nurtured, developed and strengthened. There is no benefit if we think of this good quality called 'love' as being some remote thing outside of us.

It is best if through engaging in this meditation practice of seven-fold cause and effect we cultivate the loving kindness we have just discussed. Or at least we should try to derive some other benefits from this meditation practice in our own life, by enhancing the love which we already possess in our mind.

What this teaching means is for us to take it to heart. Simply talking about love, or saying that we have love

for others, means nothing. For instance if you are married, then on your wedding day you said that you would share your life together in times of happiness and sorrow. It is easy to say that, but if those words are not integrated into your life, then this ceremony has no meaning.

An example of a couple who have real love for each other is an elderly couple who have lived together for many years. They always share everything: they share the good times together like having picnics, whereas if one is sick the other will immediately look after them. If they are joined together in true love, then they are like true servants to each other for their whole life. If one is sick in bed, the other sits by the bed, and is completely dedicated, and that is the most important thing. On the other hand we can see other couples who have lived together for many years. Suddenly if one is hospitalised the other, instead of being concerned and available, will go out to find another partner!

It is not easy to have pure love but at least by knowing the difference between love and attachment we can try to make an effort to make our feelings of love stronger than those of desire. If we can achieve this, it is a cause for a very healthy and stable relationship.

We should investigate our own situation. Can we live alone or do we need someone else as a friend? For most people it is very important to have a friend. Therefore, we have to think about how we can bring happiness in our life by having a friend, or how we end up with more suffering by not having a friend. In this way, by seeing that friendship is so important, we develop our skill in maintaining that relationship, and making it more mutually beneficial.

The eight benefits of the loving kindness can be found in the lam rim text. They are based upon Nagajuna's text *The Precious Garland*,

"Though such a person might not be liberated, they will achieve love's eight cardinal virtues. The merit of giving the three hundred types of food every day in the three times, cannot compare with the merit gained from meditating a short while on love. Gods and humans will come to love them: and give protection: they will have mental ease: and much happiness: poison and weapons will not harm: they will achieve their aims effortlessly: and be born in Brahma's world."

You should study these benefits in your own time.

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18 November 1997

Try to cultivate the right motivation.

422.321.124 The Fourth Cause: Loving Kindness (cont)

ཡིད་འོང་གི་བྱུང་སྐབས།

In the last teaching we began to discuss loving kindness. According to the lam rim commentary we are using, there is no need to specify the object of this meditation, because it is the same object that you used in developing all the previous stages of the seven-fold cause and effect. However, Lama Tsong Khapa's text *Great Exposition Of The Stages Of The Path*, indicates that the object of this meditation on loving kindness is all those sentient beings who are lacking happiness and in this meditation on loving kindness, the mental attitude to be cultivated is one which sincerely, and genuinely wishes all beings to have happiness.

In general if one has progressed well in the preceding the stages of the seven-fold cause and effect, from recognising all sentient beings as one's mother, up to this stage of loving kindness, then as a result of your success in the previous stages, this loving kindness will arise without any difficulties and extra effort.

However there is a specific meditation to generate loving kindness if one is generating it separately, or if there has been little progress in the preceding three stages of the seven-fold cause and effect. Here one initially thinks of all one's friends and those who are close, and then reflects on the various ways they lack joy, happiness and satisfaction. Let alone possessing a very high degree of uncontaminated happiness, they do not even possess a mundane or contaminated happiness and joy in their life. Even more unfortunate is that you can see how they mistake suffering and pain for pleasure and happiness and so seek out that suffering and pain!

You naturally wish for those you cherish to have satisfaction and happiness, and this thought indicates that you have generated loving kindness. Then having cultivated love for your friends you do the same for strangers, by considering how in various ways those strangers are also deprived of happiness. Then by doing this same meditation you can extend your love to your enemies. In this way it is possible to generate loving kindness towards all sentient beings.

In practical terms we can see whether we really do generate and possess love for other beings. When we do not specify any other beings then through our meditation we feel that we can extend loving kindness to all other sentient beings. However if we check closely, then we find that we have a long way to go to actually cultivate a

true love which comes right from the heart, rather than a love which seems to exist in the space outside of us. Do we really have this true love coming forth from our heart for even one person? We see, when we reflect on this, that it is most likely that we do not.

This shows that, although we can talk of the benefits of showing love to others and we can say that we care for others, in terms of practical experience we fall far behind. So, we must put more effort into generating this loving kindness.

There is the potential within all beings to cultivate true loving kindness. Because of this potential, we feel this love whenever our mind meets with the right conditions, for instance if we engage in meditation on loving kindness or compassion. Therefore to develop this potential for love and compassion, we have to familiarise ourselves with this practice of generating love and compassion.

It is said that the first three of the seven-fold cause and effect form the basis to produce the thought of benefiting other beings which is loving kindness and compassion. What do we understand by loving kindness and compassion being the thought of benefiting others? We can understand the meaning of love and compassion to be that they respectively fulfil all the desires of other beings, and eliminate all that they do not want. For instance what all other beings desire is happiness, and that is the intention of showing them love: when we show love to others we wish for them to possess happiness. What other beings do not desire is suffering, and this is eliminated by showing compassion, since compassion is the wish for others to be free from suffering. From this point of view it is said that loving kindness and compassion are the thought of benefiting other beings, or the aspiration to achieve that goal for other beings.

In fact the more we know about the benefits of showing love and compassion the more we become inspired to develop it. We can see that the only way to truly benefit other beings is by developing love and compassion.

The Measurement Of Having Cultivated Loving Kindness

Regarding the measurement of having cultivated loving kindness, one lam rim text says that the sign of having cultivated loving kindness to all beings is that whenever you come across any sentient being you feel so close and affectionate to them that, as the text says, "You feel like patting them on the head". If this is the kind of feeling

you experience with any other sentient being you see, then this is the indication of having generated loving kindness.

The Eight Benefits Of Love

Nagarjuna's text *Precious Garland* lists the eight benefits of meditating on love.

Prior to listing them, there is a verse in the *Precious Garland* comparing the benefits of offering a clay pot filled with food and drink to an infinite number of beings every day for the three times, with the benefits obtained from meditating on this love for even the instant it takes to snap the fingers. You gain more merit from that momentary meditation on love than from offering all that food to all those sentient beings.

Then the *Precious Garland*¹ lists the eight benefits which are:

1. Receiving love from godly and human beings
2. Receiving protection from godly and human beings

It is true that if you show love to other beings, it will be returned. Even if you show love to a lesser being such as an animal, they also return it. Pets show love for their owner not necessarily because of the food they receive, but with the meal the owner also shows affection. Then the dog, or pet, responds with affection, even guarding their owner's possessions, and doing other favours for the owner.

In Tibet there were many nomads, and their dogs were not particularly well trained. Even though they slept during the day, at night they kept awake and patrolled the area. This was a responsibility which the animals assumed in order to do a favour for their owners. They also showed affection for their owners by wagging their tails. So there is no doubt that any person who extends love to all beings will receive love and protection from the gods and other humans.

3. Achieving health of body
4. Achieving happiness and health of mind
5. Not receiving harm from poisons
6. Not receiving harm from weapons
7. Fulfilling all one's wishes effortlessly □
8. Achieving the higher existence of Brahma².

As a follower of the Lord Buddha's teaching, the main basis of our practice should be this compassion and love. Based upon this practice of compassion, or refraining from harmful actions to others, one follows the perfect training of the Buddha's teaching. In our everyday life we should also know the benefits of cultivating love and compassion. To mention one of these, compassion is the best way to resolve conflict with enemies. As said in many texts you gain true victory over your enemies by compassion, and through compassion this victory is lasting. Whereas, if we try to defeat an enemy by violent means, then although we may gain victory initially, later when the enemy gains strength and power they will retaliate and defeat us. Therefore, it is important to see the advantages of this practice in everyday life.

Once again Geshe-la extends his thanks to all of you who have done the written test. He is very happy with your answers.

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1 Verse 283 to 285

2 Editor: "the higher existence of Brahma", according to Jetsun Rendawa refers to "the happiness of the Brahma Realm set in the first concentration of the Form Realm." The Form Realm has four concentrations and this is the first.

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25 November 1997

As usual try to establish the bodhicitta motivation by generating the thought that you are studying and practising these stages of the path to enlightenment for the sake of all living beings.

As part of your motivation, you should also think that the reason for listening to these teachings is to put them into practice in order to achieve the state of buddhahood for the sake of all beings. The benefit of correcting our motivation before undertaking any action is that the bodhicitta motivation ensures that our actions are not selfish and are directed towards benefiting other beings. Then right from the beginning we ensure that our practice is a true spiritual practice, and is in fact a Mahayana practice.

Benefits Of Loving Kindness

As we discussed in the teachings last week, through the practice of cultivating loving kindness we receive the benefits of all the other spiritual practices. By cultivating loving kindness for all beings we purify a large portion of our own negativities, and accumulate a large amount of merit or positive energy. This practice is the true cause to take rebirth in the human and godly realms. For instance, it is said that by cultivating loving kindness for all you attain as many rebirths as human or godly beings as there are living beings. There is also the benefit of preventing undesirable diseases and untimely death, as well as preventing harm from non-human spirits. Therefore cultivating loving kindness is the spiritual practice we should do in order to achieve any goal on our spiritual path, whether it be purifying negativities, or speeding up our spiritual progress in the path, or removing obstacles in our path.

422.321.125 The Fifth Cause: Great Compassion

སྤོང་ཇེ།

Having meditated on loving kindness the next stage of cultivating bodhicitta is great compassion. To engage in this meditation on compassion it is necessary to know:

- the object of one's compassion which is all other sentient beings who are undergoing a great deal of suffering
- the mental attitude of compassion which is wishing all these beings to be free from this suffering.

With this mental attitude of compassion you feel, "How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were free from suffering", and then "May they be free of suffering", and "May I be a cause for them to be free suffering".

Great compassion holds a unique place in Mahayana spiritual training. It is said that great compassion as a method for achieving full enlightenment is like a father, whereas the wisdom of realising emptiness is likened to a mother. The point of using this analogy of mother and father is related to ancient cultures in which the race (or

caste)¹ of the child is determined by the race (or caste) of the father. This applied in very specific detail so that if the father is a king then all his children will be of that kingly race. Likewise when you generate great compassion, you create the definitive cause to achieve the Mahayana enlightenment of buddhahood. In other words great compassion does not result in the enlightenment of the lesser vehicle of hearers and solitary realisers. However the wisdom of emptiness is likened to a mother, since the mother can produce a child of any race dependent upon the race of the father.²

So great compassion is the root practice of the Mahayana or great vehicle, which means that all Mahayana practice should be based upon great compassion. In general it is said that the basis or foundation of Buddhist practice should be non-harmfulness.

The Importance Of Great Compassion At The Beginning, Middle And End Of The Spiritual Path

It is important to know the significance of great compassion in all stages of the Mahayana path, from the beginning to the fruit of the path.

Because of the importance of great compassion to the Mahayana path Chandrakirti homage paid to great compassion at the beginning of his text *Supplement To The Middle Way*. This is quite unusual since most compositions pay homage to buddhas and bodhisattvas. Chandrakirti's praise to compassion indicates that great compassion is important at the beginning, middle, and the end of the Mahayana path. To yield a good harvest, the most important cause at the beginning is sowing good seed, in the middle it is water and heat, and at the end the harvest is a good crop. In yielding the great harvest of buddhahood, compassion is the only cause which is important in the beginning, the middle and the end. In his praise of compassion Chandrakirti uses the analogy of seed, then water, then harvest to explain why compassion is the one and only³ cause which is important at the beginning, middle, and the end.

¹ Editor: This refers to the caste system of ancient India. This was a patrilineal system, where descent or title is traced through the male line.

² Editor: It is a tenet of the Prasangika Madhyamika school that the emptiness realised by both Mahayana and Hinayana practitioners is the same in that both realise the non-inherent existence of the self. However they are differentiated by their method, which for the Mahayanist is compassion that has developed into the mind of bodhicitta.

³ Editor: From the "Illumination of the thought" by Lama Tzong Khapa a commentary to Chandrakirti's "Supplement to the middle way"; "Compassion alone' indicates that unlike the three different examples of importance (the seed, water and ripeness) at the beginning, middle and end for an external harvest, only compassion is important in the beginning, middle and end for the harvest of the conqueror".

At The Beginning

The reason why great compassion is important at the beginning of the Mahayana path is that when it is generated compassion, it makes a person become very definite about entering into that path. It is the very direct and substantial cause for bodhicitta to arise.

Without the great compassion one cannot enter the Mahayana path. To enter into the Mahayana path one must generate bodhicitta, and in order to generate bodhicitta there has to be a strong sense of responsibility for freeing all other beings from the ocean of suffering, and a strong resolve to do so. Such a sense of universal responsibility to free all sentient beings from suffering will only arise from great compassion, otherwise there will not be this sense of responsibility. On the other hand we see that if we do not generate great compassion, then we cannot produce this sense of responsibility and vow to free all beings from suffering. Without this we cannot generate bodhicitta, and without bodhicitta we cannot be a Mahayana practitioner.

In The Middle

We have seen why great compassion is important at the beginning of the Mahayana path but it is also important at the middle of that path. This is the time from when we first generate the bodhicitta mind up to the attainment of full enlightenment. In this period great compassion is also very important, because in the middle the Mahayana practitioner has to meditate all the time to further develop and intensify great compassion. If the practitioner fails to focus upon great compassion in the middle, there is a danger of falling into the lower vehicle as a result of losing their Mahayana spirit and courage.

Shantideva said that if not for great compassion then it is very easy to lose the Mahayana spirit and to feel very discouraged by thinking of the great number of sentient beings and all their very negative, ill-mannered and pathetic deeds, and also because of the length of training needed to complete the Mahayana path. Then it would be easy to fall into the lesser vehicle of hearers and solitary realisers. However with great compassion to sustain the mind, the Mahayana spirit will never diminish because one will have no concern for one's own needs and suffering, and will voluntarily take upon oneself any hardship in order to benefit other beings. So great compassion in the middle is the very important cause to quickly accumulate merit.

At The End

At the end on attaining the state of buddhahood, the reason why all the activities of a buddha or enlightened being automatically benefit other beings is said to be due to this great compassion. Having attained the state of enlightenment a buddha does not think that the ultimate goal has been reached, and be satisfied with self peace and bliss. Rather every action of the buddha is to benefit other sentient beings.

How quickly bodhisattvas achieve full enlightenment or buddhahood depends upon the intensity of their development of this great compassion. We should also understand that the reason why the tantric path is the quicker path to enlightenment is because that path requires a more intense state of great compassion.

Compassion In Personal Practice

How can you relate your knowledge that great compassion is important at the beginning, middle, and end of the Mahayana path to your own practice? You have to realise that whatever compassion you have within you is very important and precious, and it is a quality through which

you can truly help and benefit other beings.

In the context of your own practice, compassion is important at the beginning. In the beginning whether you show any concern for those around you - friends, relatives, strangers, enemies - depends upon whether you have compassion and love for them. Not only is compassion important at the beginning because it initiates within us the thought and actions to help others, but in order to continue these actions of help and benefit we must retain this thought of compassion in our mind. It is very obvious that in the beginning we generate some compassion, and then because of this compassion we go and help others. But if that compassion does not continue, our actions to help others will stop. The benefit of compassion is not only in terms of other beings, but also for your own life in terms of sustaining lasting peace and happiness in your life, which you can continue to enjoy if you practise compassion.

Using Compassion To Assess Spiritual Progress

We can judge our progress towards complete enlightenment on the basis of how our compassion is progressing. If someone asks "How close are you to reaching full enlightenment?" you can answer by checking your own mental attitude to other beings: how much compassion there is, and whether or not it is biased, and how strong it is.

In this way we can, to some extent, judge for ourselves how close we are to reaching our spiritual goal. You may notice some negative thought towards other beings that you have had in the past has been transformed to compassion and love, and also that your compassion is unbiased and is stronger. The text says that this is a sign that you have minimised your faults, and increased the positive qualities. You can see that if you continue with your practice it is possible you can completely remove all the faults and attain all the excellent qualities, which is the full enlightenment.

In our spiritual practice we try to gain those qualities which have lasting benefits for this life, the next life and the lives thereafter. However we cannot expect to gain these spiritual qualities quickly and easily. So it is important to be very convinced of the benefits of seeking these qualities, and then we are able to continue to follow our spiritual practice, even if it is hard and there is no apparent sign of any development or progress. If we do this over a period of time then our progress will become apparent, and this gives us the motivation to continue to practice. As a result your practice will become easier and a source of inspiration and delight.

The quality we seek to develop through spiritual practice is far more beneficial than anything we can gain in this mundane world, where there are so many appealing objects to be seen and heard so that we feel we must possess them. We have so many things in this world but still we feel we must collect more. We can see how all these things are futile and meaningless because we must leave them all behind when we face death. At death it is only the qualities of our mind which can support us and bring peace and happiness.

Therefore if we keep the continuity of our practice it is possible that when we die, we shall die as an excellent practitioner. When an excellent practitioner dies they do so with a great celebration of this life - it is said like a son meeting his father with great joy. In order to encourage oneself in spiritual practice, we must remind ourselves of its long term benefits.

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་བཅུངས།



2 December 1997

Ensure that your body is fully relaxed and that you have the correct motivation to listen to the teachings. Develop the correct motivation by generating the wish for bodhicitta, the genuine wish to achieve full enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. Then think that in order to achieve this wish you are listening to, and will practise these teachings.

422.321.125 Benefits Of Compassion (cont)

སྒྲིབ་ལྟེ།

As we discussed in the last teaching there are countless benefits of cultivating great compassion. We have learnt that the stronger our compassion is, the closer we are to completing the goal of our spiritual path, which is complete and full enlightenment. We also learnt that compassion is an indispensable quality which enables us to benefit other beings. There is an example used wherein a child is caught in a fire pit. Although others might observe this with horror, the mother will jump into the fire to try to save her child. What forces her to do this? It is her compassion for the child.

It is very likely that if people share love and compassion for each other, then whenever one is in need of help they always get help and support from the other. There are many instances where we find this. Geshe-la told of a Tibetan sent to Japan for training. Where he stayed there was a huge gas tank which caught fire, and which was in danger of exploding. Realising that this could result in the death of many people, he grabbed the gas tank and threw it to a safer place. As a result he lost one hand but he saved the lives of many other people in the area. Likewise for us to be truly able to support our friends, partners and special friends we should develop love and compassion for each other, because if we do there will be mutual benefit.

The Method To Generate Compassion

To generate compassion Lama Tsong Khapa in "Great Exposition Of The Stages Of The Path" recommended to first generate compassion towards the being who endures the most suffering or the most pain. It is said that if, instead of focusing our compassion on a particular specific being, we focus it upon all other sentient beings, then while in meditation it may seem that we have had some success in cultivating compassion for others, however afterwards when we check and ask ourselves "To whom have we generated compassion?" We find that in respect to a specific being we have made no progress in developing compassion.

In the commentary text there are very clear instructions

on how to generate compassion using the example of a sheep about to be slaughtered. If you observe that sheep there is every sign of its fear and suffering, and it is clear that it has no protector. In this way we can generate compassion for that sheep, and then generate compassion for those sheep being led to the slaughterhouse, then extend that compassion to all the other sheep which will be slaughtered in the future. Thus we can generate compassion for all other sentient beings, by realising that they are the same as the sheep in the example.

We learnt in the small and medium stages of the path of the suffering other beings undergo. Think of those already in the hell realms and how they are subject to that suffering, and of those born in the animal realms and subject to the suffering of that existence. All sentient beings are subject to suffering because of being bound to cyclic existence. Thinking of the causes of suffering, which are negative or non-virtuous actions, we can observe that due to their non-virtuous actions all other sentient beings have suffered immensely in the past, are suffering in the present, and they will also suffer in the future.

and the reasons to achieve liberation from suffering, then Because of your understanding of suffering, its causes, and how with a sense of renunciation you truly wish to be liberated from this suffering existence, you understand that other sentient beings suffer in the same way, and that they too wish to be liberated from suffering. So you can generate compassion for them. Generating compassion to others is a matter of just replacing the object - replacing oneself with other beings. Understanding personal suffering and the reasons to be free of this suffering, one realises this is the same for other beings. This becomes compassion. By contemplating the fate of other beings you generate compassion for them.

When you contemplate your own fate you generate renunciation. Through this you realise that in order to eliminate suffering you have to eliminate negative or non-virtuous actions, and to create happiness you have to generate positive or virtuous actions.

We can see that cultivating compassion for other beings complements developing personal renunciation. Likewise when we cultivate renunciation it helps us to develop compassion for other beings. The key of this whole practice of developing compassion and renunciation is to inspire us to engage in more virtuous practices. Whether we think of our self or of others we

are all in the same situation of being subject to cyclic existence.

This is best explained by Chandrakirti in his text where he said that the initial cause is self grasping, which is the deep sense of 'I', and from this arises the deep sense of 'my'. From 'I' and 'my' arise attachment to those who are on our side, our friends, and hatred towards enemies. Impelled by attachment and hatred we accumulate negative karma, and as a result of these karmic actions, and without any choice, we revolve around in cyclic existence.

Here we are mainly talking about great compassion. But, even if we fail to produce great compassion in this life it is still worthwhile putting an effort into trying to do so. Then even if we do not generate great compassion in this life, our effort leaves some seed in the mind so that in the future it will be easier to generate compassion. It is even possible to produce compassion in the future just by meeting a mahayana spiritual teacher.

The Measurement Of Having Generated Compassion

As you will find in the commentary text, the measurement of having cultivated great compassion is described using the analogy of a mother with a child of whom she is extremely fond and affectionate. If we could have that same feeling towards all beings as the mother has for her child when it is in pain or suffering, then that is the indication of having cultivated great compassion.

Cultivating such great compassion depends upon training in meditation and the practice of compassion. We may find that in respect to a specific being that we have made no progress at all. The lam rim text gives the example of a sheep about to be killed by a butcher. Anyone who observes this sheep being slaughtered will feel some irritation in their body, to the point where it is easy for compassion to arise for this poor being who is in such a desperate state of suffering. After training in the generation of compassion by using a specific being, one then slowly generates compassion for other beings to the point of being able to generate compassion for all beings.

Not only do we have to make a deliberate effort, but we must contrive situations for our mind such as the suffering of other beings and so forth. Only then can we know compassion. Great compassion however is always spontaneous. It is not conditional upon thinking of the reasons to for sympathy and compassion, but rather great compassion arises just by observing any other sentient beings.

Next week in the discussion night Geshe-la suggests discussing the first five of the seven fold cause and effect, recognising all sentient beings as one's mother up to great compassion. Out of these five points he will choose three for your written test, which must be finished in half an hour. As is the study group tradition, after the last written test we shall recite prayers such as the 21 Taras, and Lama Tsong Khapa prayers, and then relax with tea and conversation.

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.