
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།



30 September 1997

Try to cultivate the proper motivation, which is wishing to achieve full enlightenment in order to benefit all sentient beings. Try to cultivate this motivation in your heart, not just in words. Also develop the motivation to put these teachings into practice in order to achieve the ultimate spiritual wish of full enlightenment for the sake of all beings.

422.321.12 The Actual Seven-Fold Cause and Effect Instruction

In past teachings we finished the benefits of bodhicitta, and also the meditation on immeasurable equanimity. Tonight we start the teachings on the actual seven-fold cause and effect instruction to generate bodhicitta.

422.321.121 The first cause: Recognising all Sentient Beings as one's Mother

The first of the seven-fold cause and effect instructions is to recognise all beings as having been one's mother. It is said that this first step is difficult to cultivate, yet we have to realise that without this first step it is impossible to generate the following steps. Therefore we need to make very serious effort to cultivate this first step.

The relationship with one's mother is the closest relationship one can have with another sentient being. Therefore it is said that to cultivate bodhicitta mind one has to recognise all sentient beings as one's mother, otherwise one is deprived of the opportunity to cultivate bodhicitta. So it is very important to make effort to see all sentient beings as one's mother at an experiential level.

Although this is a difficult step, unlike profound topics such as impermanence and emptiness, there is not much scriptural and logical evidence that can be employed to prove this fact. There are some scriptural sources but these alone will not convince our mind. The most important factor that will convince your mind is to employ, to the best of your knowledge, as much logical proof as possible. If you take time to explore this topic with many reasons, you can gradually see how it makes sense that all sentient beings have, in fact, been one's mother.

Beginningless Mind

The logical starting point, and the most important thing we need to know, is that our life is beginningless. Once we have proved to ourselves that our life is beginningless, then we can infer that each and every sentient being has been our mother in the past.

By saying that life is beginningless we are also saying

that consciousness has no beginning. The continuum of our consciousness is like a seed: you cannot trace the initial cause of any particular seed. That seed came from a cause, which came from a former cause, and so it goes without beginning. If we consider the life which we take in cyclic existence, then due to the force of karma and delusion the number of lives we took in the past is infinite. If we trace back we can find no beginning where we can say that this is the start of one's life in cyclic existence.

If you burn a seed in a fire, then that is the end of the seed. If you trace forward rather than backwards, you realise that, just like that burnt seed, your life in cyclic existence has an end, because that life is based on the object of the conception of self-grasping, which does not exist. When we realise this, we can realise that there is an end to this life within cyclic existence. The ignorance which is this conception of self-grasping is the seed, or the root of our continuation in cyclic existence. When the seed is completely burnt, there is no chance for it to sprout and grow branches. Likewise once the seed of ignorance is destroyed, or at least if we can see the possibility of its destruction, or the removal of that root cause, then we can understand that there will be no creation of karma, and without karma there is no birth. So although life has no beginning in cyclic existence, we can see the possibility of it having an end.

Logical Proofs Of Beginningless Mind

Regarding the logical proof which shows that our consciousness, or mind, has no beginning Chandrakirti stated, "The mind of a just born child has a preceding moment of mind, because it is a mind."

If we are asked, "From where does our current mind come?" we might say, "It comes from the mind which we had yesterday." This is one simple reason we can use, because if the mind that we have today is not a continuation of the mind we had yesterday, then there would be no connection. But there is a connection, in the sense that we planned yesterday to do something today, and we have completed that task. The reason why we can do it today, is because it was planned in our mind yesterday. Just as today we have plans to do things tomorrow, or on the next day, then when the time comes we can do those things. Therefore it is very clear that the mind we have today comes from yesterday's mind, and yesterday's mind came from the day before that. We can see this for as long as we have lived in this current life.

From where does the mind we have in this life come?

We can say it comes from our body, because the body supports the mind. If it comes from this body, then from where does this body come? And so we can trace right back to the first moment of conception in the mother's womb which is when life in this body began. The question is does that first moment of body have a karmic cause, a previous life, or does it come totally from our parents?"

The initial cause of one's body is the union of egg and sperm from one's parents. Even scientifically, however it is clear that this union of egg and sperm does not always develop into a new body. Therefore we say that at conception consciousness must also be entering, since the union of egg and sperm alone does not always form life.

We can say that the egg and the sperm come from our parents, but can we say that our consciousness also comes from our parents? If it does come from our parents many unsolved questions arise. If we look at children from the same parents, each one of them might have very different habitual behaviours and different personalities. If their minds as well as their bodies came from their parents, then why are there so many differences in the children? You can see for example, how within the one family one child can be calm, soft and placid by nature, whereas the other child can be rough, aggressive and very angry by nature.

It is said that there is some parental influence in the personality of the children; boys will have more personality traits of the mother, and a girl will have more traits from her father, however this needs to be examined. But in terms of the child's natural habitual behaviour, it is extremely difficult to say that this has anything to do with the parents. If habitual behaviour was inherited, then it would follow that the children would resemble their parents in this respect.

So the mind of the child has not come from the parent, and is not the same continuation of the parents' minds. Then what is the origin of the mind? If we say that it comes from some mind other than that of the parent, then this is a sign of existence of a previous life.

Logically then, if we have to contend that this current life must have a former life, then it follows that that former life must have had a life before that, and so on. So we cannot trace back to the beginning, as the number of lives we have taken in the past becomes infinite. It follows that if each sentient being has served as our parent, then logically there are not enough sentient beings to have served as our parent in the past. In this way we see that in the countless numbers of past lives, then each time we are born from a mother's womb or from an egg, we have relied upon some other being as our mother. Using this method we can deduce that there is not one sentient being who has not been our mother in the past.

It is said that this first step of recognising all sentient beings as one's mother is an essential cause to generate impartial love and compassion for all sentient beings, as it extends the number of objects for whom we generate love and compassion.

Another very effective reason proving the existence of previous lives is our experience of a different identity as "I" when someone calls our name. We have some notion of a self identity which is attached to the name of this life, but we also have the experience of another "I" which can arise without any connection to the name of this present life. Therefore there is an "I" which is related to this life, and there is an "I" which is not related to this life.

When we talk of the existence of life before and after, the whole question is one of the continuum of our mind, and of our self. If we can prove that our mind is beginningless or comes from a previous life, then naturally we can also understand that there is a future life.

Given the fact that our mind's continuum has come from a past life and has no beginning, and will likewise go on into a future life, what we need to know is that in our continuum there is an habitual pattern which determines our mental attitude, familiarity with, and ability to achieve things. It is important to see that happiness and suffering are all the outcomes of the good and bad nature in our habitual pattern. Therefore our focus in spiritual practice is on developing this good nature and habitual pattern in our mind.

Our most important spiritual practice is subduing our own mind, but we cannot achieve a result instantly. It takes a continuous effort, and to make this continuous effort we must maintain our motivation to practise dharma or the spiritual teachings. Having such a continuously strong motivation to practise dharma also depends upon our understanding of the connection of this life with previous and future lives. On this basis we slowly develop an understanding of the spiritual path. Then how we make continuous progress is a matter of being skilful, such as realising that it is very important to not rush, or force, the pace and that spiritual practice is rather a very gradual process, where we make an effort bit by bit, but always in a continuous way. For more details you can refer to the commentary.

The point of always training our mind to objects such as non-attachment, non-hatred, non-jealousy, non-competitiveness, is not only to enhance peace and happiness in this life, but it also has some benefit for future lives. We know from our experience in this life that we feel very peaceful and calm when there is no disturbance of anger, jealousy, or attachment in our mind, then we feel totally relaxed. If we train our mind to be distant from any objects of attachment, anger and so on, then if we are born as a human in the future we shall find more peace in the sense that there will be less influence from desire and so forth. As we always emphasise in the teachings, what we are looking for in our spiritual practice is help or support from within ourself. Once we have found that support, then even when we encounter deceit, we are not disturbed and do not feel discarded, deceived or helpless.

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

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7 October 1997

Try to think that the purpose of listening to this teaching on the stages of the path to enlightenment is to put it into practice, so that you can achieve the fully enlightened state of buddhahood for the sake of all beings. Make sure that bodhicitta is the motivation behind studying and practising this lam rim.

Recognising All Sentient Beings As One's Mother

As part of the meditation on this first step of generating bodhicitta - the step of recognising all sentient beings as one's mother - one must firstly establish the existence of a previous life. Using every logical proof to establish this fact, one then tries to develop the conviction that there was a life before this one.

If you go back through your past lives, you cannot say that your life began at a particular point. In other words the number of lives we have had is countless, or infinite.

After this think that your current mother is not only your mother in this lifetime, but has in fact also been your mother in countless past lifetimes. Likewise think of your father, then friends and relatives, and then strangers in this way. Then you see that all sentient beings, even those you view as your enemy, have been your mother countless times in the past.

Relating Theory To Daily Life

In the commentary on the lam rim text you find this comment by one bhikshu, "He eats his father's flesh and hits his mother. The enemy he killed sits on his knee. A wife gnaws her husband's bones. Samsara can be such a farce!"¹.

You need to develop your understanding of the fact that all sentient beings have been your mother, to the point that it spontaneously arises in relation to any sentient being: when you eat meat you feel some negative sense that you are eating the flesh of your mother, or if you observe a tiny ant, you immediately recall how in many past lifetimes all your hopes of survival depended on that ant who once served as your mother.

If you actually realise the step of remembering all sentient beings as being your mother, then that thought arises very spontaneously in your mind. Even if you do not achieve this realisation, some meditation on this step will have some effect in terms of reducing the self-cherishing mind, and increasing the thought of helping and benefiting others. Then, as a benefit of this

meditation you will have more patience and tolerance, especially when others cause personal harm.

422.321.122 The Second Cause: Remembering The Kindness Of All Sentient Beings As One's Mother

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In this second step you contemplate the kindness of all motherly sentient beings every time they were your mother, and since all sentient beings have been your mother, you extend the thought of this kindness to all sentient beings.

The easiest way to remember the kindness of all sentient beings is by first remembering the kindness of your mother in this life. This is easy to remember in terms of the beginning, the middle, and the end.

Our Mother's Kindness At The Beginning: During Pregnancy

Our mother's kindness in the beginning is for the nine months when we are in her womb.

Physically our mother felt the moment of conception. It is said that this very first moment of a new life takes away all the energy from the mother's body. You all know how women become very weak and lethargic at this time. It is said some women feel like they are falling over a cliff, or that they have a feeling of sinking down at the moment of conception.

It is good to contemplate how one's mother sacrifices herself at that moment, and this is important because our relationship with our mother is important. This meditation can develop closeness with one's mother and help to overcome any problems, either now or in the future.

Despite the loss of her freedom and pleasures, and the extra burden that she has to carry, the moment one is conceived your mother feels a tremendous, spontaneous flow of love towards you and thinks "This is my child". At the same time extra worries and concerns arise in her mind. She is no longer responsible for just her own life, but now has the direct responsibility for two lives. If we consider the sacrifices she makes, her love must be very great and deep.

Your mother is always concerned about your safety when you are in her womb, and because of this she may have to change her lifestyle. If she is fond of jogging or dancing, she might stop this. She is also very thoughtful of what she eats or drinks - whether it is too hot or too cold - and she is even aware of her body temperature.

¹ Editor's note: we have inserted the text from page 575, *Liberation in the Palm of your Hand*

As a result of your conception there are great changes and more stress to her life.

When you are in the womb, you receive all your energy and nutrition from your mother, so whatever she eats or drinks comes to you through the umbilical cord. When you are in that state you would probably die if you were fed by mouth. There are also karmic explanations as to why it is like this.

At the back of her mind your mother is always concerned about your safety. She cannot even sleep properly for fear of causing harm to you. Even at this early stage of your life you can see how much affection and love you receive from your mother; what sacrifices of her own pleasure and freedom she makes; what pain and discomfort she endures.

We should always remember her kindness so that we can be more grateful and appreciative of our mother. There are those who believe their mother has been very bad or has abused them. Why do these people hold such a negative attitude towards their mother? Do the reasons for which they feel negative outnumber her kindnesses? It is not right to completely forget the kindness which you receive from your mother, and hold in your mind the few abusive words that she said to you. You see the benefits of viewing your mother from the perspective of all the good things she has done for you.

Without the kindness of our mother we would not have survived. All the credit for meeting with the Dharma and being able to do what one wanted in life goes to our mother. In a formal meditation on the topic of the kindness of the mother, you clearly and vividly visualise your current mother in front of you. Then as we have just discussed, remember her kindness from the moment of conception through the nine months and ten days in the womb. Not only did she show great love and affection, but she also underwent great physical and mental pain. To some extent you can justify her difficulties by saying that her body was karmically or biologically built to carry you, but you should still consider how very difficult it is to carry an even small load for just a few hours, and imagine how you would feel. Your mother made great sacrifices while you were in the womb.

Our Mother's Kindness In The Middle: At Birth

Next we think of our mother's kindness in the middle, when she gave birth.

Here we contemplate what our mother undergoes, and what we are like at the time of birth. Of course all women who have given birth know from their own experience that birth is physically very painful. Those who have not had the experience of giving birth can learn about that pain through reading books, or by observing birth. Here, however it is important to think as if you had experienced the excruciating pain of childbirth yourself.

When you are first born you are just like a maggot. Compared to other species the human being has more potential, but at birth we are more helpless than most. Other creatures can get up and find their mother's nipple to suckle but we cannot.

Despite all this our mother forgets all her pain amidst her joy, which is greater than if she found a treasure. When newly born we are completely powerless and helpless, and reliant upon the care and affection of our mother. Immediately after our birth she holds us up to the warmth of her body. Having been in so much pain and in such a mess, how could she manage to hold you up if not for her love and affection. After all the pain she underwent there is no anger or hatred: it is all love and affection. As you develop she always provides every comfort through the warmth of her body, and she tries to entertain you and bring a smile to your face.

Her love is such that she is prepared to do virtually everything. Even if she is normally very fastidious she will wipe your nose with her own mouth or she cleans away your urine and excrement with her hand if it is necessary. These things happen even with women who will not normally even go close to a room which smells. If you do not remember your mother's kindness you will not have a sense of gratitude, and the wish to repay that kindness.

It is important to know the ways our mother has supported us. Then when the time comes you have the thought of repaying their kindness. If your mother is ill you think "It is now my turn to serve her. It is now my opportunity to repay her kindness."

Geshe Doga reminded everyone that the Study Group practice nights were open to all and asked members of the Study Group to make all visitors very welcome. He was also particularly pleased to see how clean the stained glass window was as a result of the cleaning on the previous Sunday in preparation for this Thursday night's Practice evening.

Cleaning is not just to clean out one's own karmic negativities, nor just to make an offering to the Three Jewels. It is also so that visitors to the Centre can enjoy it more because the place is kept neat and clean.

In the past Geshe-la has taught what you should reflect upon as you clean away the dirt and stains, so it is good to recollect those teachings as you clean and sweep around the place.

Geshe-la then spoke briefly about the saying "If you walk slowly you will get to your destination more quickly". He learnt the phrase when he was escaping from Tibet to India. On that journey people in his group kept asking their guide when they would get to India, and the guide told them not to worry, just to keep walking slowly. It made a lot of sense. If you mentally wish, you get very tense. If you relax and do not worry, you forget and get to your destination. Then, Geshe-la added, there is also the added benefit if you are a slow walker, that when you get to your destination, the fast ones will have made the tea.

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14 October 1997

Let us cultivate the motivation of strongly wishing to achieve the state of buddhahood to benefit all sentient beings. For this reason, you should generate the intention of listening to this teaching on the lam rim in order to put it into practice.

Reminding Ourselves Of The Benefits Of Bodhicitta

We have been discussing the method of generating bodhicitta through the seven-fold cause and effect. You have just contemplated in meditation two of the many benefits of the bodhicitta, and it is because we see these many benefits that we trying to cultivate this bodhicitta.

As we have said, bodhicitta is the essence of all the mahayana teachings. Whether what we study and practise will be mahayana practice, depends upon whether bodhicitta is incorporated into it.

We have also leant that bodhicitta is the source of accumulating all the merit and wisdom needed to achieve enlightenment. As we learned, bodhicitta is like an alchemic liquid which can transform our spiritual practice into the causes for the truth body and form body of a buddha. So bodhicitta is the main practice of all the bodhisattvas.

Keeping these benefits of bodhicitta in our mind, we should then try to actualise this bodhicitta in our own mind.

422.321.122 Remembering The Kindness Of Motherly Sentient Beings (continued)

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Of the seven-point cause and effect for generating bodhicitta, we have discussed the first step, which is recognising all sentient beings as one's mother. Then we studied the second step which is remembering the kindness of all the motherly sentient beings. Within that step we have studied the kindness of the mother in the beginning, and the middle.

Our Mother's Kindness In The Middle: During Childhood

The kindness of one's mother in the middle includes all the kindnesses from birth and through childhood. We cannot remember all the support and care which was shown to us by our mother during our childhood. If you were a parent you would know this very easily because of your caring, kind feelings towards your own children. Even if you are not a parent, by observing parents you can understand very clearly a mother's dedication to her children, and the sacrifices she makes. Their affection is

so strong that in order to protect their child some mothers would be willingly to suffer their child's illness, even to the point of sacrificing their own life.

We spend more of our childhood with our mother than with our father, so it is mainly from her that we learn how to eat, drink and walk. Seeing her child take its first step brings so much joy and pleasure to the mother.

Geshe Doga recalls that when he sat his Geshe exam he was asked "What is the substantial cause of great compassion?", and he replied "The substantial cause of great compassion is a mother's actions or love for her child." The high lamas gathered there at that time, including Lati Rinpoche, commented that there was some sense in this point.

In childhood we receive so much love and affection from our mother, without which we would not have survived. The effort our mother made to protect and support us in a single day of our childhood is said to be equal to saving one hundred lives. Thus we can see how a child has a very special bond with its mother. Somehow the child learns more from, and depends more upon their mother. This shows the importance of her role in our upbringing.

From the mother's perspective, she has added responsibilities when she brings up children. As mothers spend more time with the children, they have more influence upon the children's lives. Once a woman has a child she has this spontaneous flow of love: automatically she must assume more burdens and responsibilities in her own personal life. We are learning this because that is what happened to our own mother. Geshe-la says that when he sees a pregnant woman he feels a very strong sense of sympathy, because it is not easy being pregnant, and then later on there is giving birth, and the effort of child rearing. It is not easy, and we need to know all that our own mothers did for us.

If we think about our school days, then not just on one day but day after day, year after year from kindergarten, through primary and then secondary school our mother supported us. She took us to school, picked us up and provided for all our needs - physical support, financial support and even just her time and interest. As said in the lam rim teachings, the mother's only concern is her children, and she wants to do everything she can to give them happiness, and to prevent any suffering.

We have to remember these things as it is easy for us to think that we achieved everything, for example a higher

degree, or a special skill or qualification, all by ourself. Whereas, if your parents had neglected their responsibilities when you were at school, then it is most likely that you would be lying in the street penniless, or wandering around and looking for trouble.

Our Mother's Kindness At The End: During Adulthood

Even after we pass childhood and reach adolescence we are financially still totally dependent upon our parents. We are also dependent upon them, particularly our mother, for our whole direction in life. Even when we reach maturity our mother's love does not stop. Unfortunately at a mature age we are in a position, whenever we find the opportunity, to challenge our mother, or our parents. From the mother's side however she is still concerned about our future, about our marriage and so forth. She always remembers our well being.

In this meditation we try to recollect the kindness and support our mother has given throughout our life. Then having done this in respect of our mother in this life, we recall how we have also received this kindness and support in other, countless lifetimes when she was also our mother.

If we consider the number of lives we had in the past, then the number of lives we have had as a human being is also beyond count, as is the number of times we relied upon another human being as our mother. In each life we received the same love and support as we are now receiving from our mother in our current life. In the same way we can think of our father as being our mother in the past. We can then extend this meditation on remembering kindness to all sentient beings.

We can also consider this kindness of mothers in non-human lives such as animals and birds. We can see how other creatures are also very affectionate to their young, and how they are willing to sacrifice their lives for their young.

Geshe Doga says that once when he was on retreat at Illusion Farm in Tasmania, he saw a peacock hen with three chicks. When a predator arrived, the peacock immediately gathered up all her chicks under her feathers, and just stood there protecting them at risk of her own life. In the end she came to no harm, but Geshe-la noticed how even birds and animals will give up their own life to protect their young ones. So we can also think about how in the past when we were born as an animal, or a bird we received the same motherly kindness and support from other sentient beings.

Through this meditation try to cultivate from our own side a pure mental attitude towards our mothers and parents. This is very important, and if we make progress in this meditation we see the amount of love and kindness we receive from our mother. When we remember her kindness, it helps us if we receive some abuse, or harm from our mother or parents, because we can see this abuse as very small compared to the love and support they have given us.

In this meditation on the first two stages of the seven-fold cause and effect, we establish in our mind that all other sentient beings have been kind in the same way as

our current mother.

So, we have finished these first two stages.

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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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21 October 1997

Once again try to cultivate the right motivation to practise and study the dharma teachings. It is very important that our motivation is not a selfish one. The best motivation is bodhicitta: through our study and practice to attain the highest and unsurpassed enlightenment to benefit all living beings.

422.321.123 The Third Stage: Repaying The Kindness

དྲིན་གསོ།

As to the subject of our teachings we have finished the first two stages of how to generate bodhicitta through meditating on the seven-fold causes and effect.

The first stage is recognising all sentient beings as having been our mother, and the second is remembering their kindness.

The third stage is wishing to repay their kindness. This is very important since it is not enough to just recognise all sentient beings as one's mother, and then remember their kindness. These first two stages must culminate in the wish to repay that kindness.

To develop the seven-fold cause and effect meditation, it is necessary to progress from one stage to the next. Just realising that all sentient beings have been one's mother is not enough. Nor is remembering their kindness sufficient. You have to develop the third stage which is wishing to repay that kindness.

In this third stage we have to consider the best way of repaying the kindness of all the motherly sentient beings.

There are two main ways.

1. Repaying the kindness in a worldly, mundane way
2. Repaying the kindness in a spiritual way

Firstly, we consider repaying the mother's kindness in a worldly sense. This is very important, and regarded as very worthwhile even by ordinary, worldly people. It is widely held that if you receive help or kindness from another, then you should repay that kindness.

Take for example our own mother's kindness. We received a great deal of material help and support from her. If we required food, drink, clothing or shelter she provided them; if we were sick she served us. So, in the worldly sense we should repay her kindness in the same way, and this is a very widely held view.

Repaying our mother's kindness in a spiritual way means repaying her with benefits even far greater than these material ones.

You have this wonderful opportunity to hear the profound Mahayana teachings from Mahayana teachers. You know how beneficial these teachings are, because

they show the path to full enlightenment or buddhahood. However you have to realise that you have had this opportunity because of the kindness of your mother who protected and sustained you. So you try to cultivate the wish that your mother will benefit from the teachings in the same way that you have done.

How To Develop The Wish To Repay That Kindness

Imagine that your mother is blind and with no guide, and is also insane. You see her walking very close to the edge of a cliff. In this situation upon whom should the mother rely upon for help? Of course it would be her child. In this situation you have the responsibility of protecting her from danger.

Next you imagine that all other sentient beings are wandering about in a strange country, with which they are completely unfamiliar. They are blind in both eyes: the right eye is blind to the conventional or relative truth, being covered with a veil of ignorance of the law of cause and effect, while the left eye is covered with the veil of ignorance of the ultimate truth. Furthermore these beings have no spiritual guide to show them the right path, or even friends who have faith and conviction in the karmic law of cause and effect. Their minds are filled with the three poisonous minds, and completely darkened by ignorance. Therefore, all their actions are faulty, and are the causes for them to remain in that state of bewilderment and suffering for a longer time. In other words all sentient beings are about to fall in the great abyss, or the cliff of the three lower realms.

Then you think of your own situation which is better than most, because you have at least met the Mahayana teachers and teachings, and you have some faith and conviction in them. In this way you try to generate the strong thought that because you are in a better situation you have some sense of responsibility for rescuing others from suffering.

What is important here is to see within oneself the capacity to benefit other motherly sentient beings. As we have discussed we can do this by comparing our own situation with that of others, and see how our situation is very good, compared with the very pitiful situation which the others endure. So you develop the thought of benefiting other sentient beings, or in other words a sense of universal responsibility strongly arises. What is the way to benefit others? It can be in material terms such as with food, clothing and so forth. Of course these are beneficial but they only serve temporarily. So you seek to benefit others in the long term or in the ultimate sense, which is to extend happiness to them, whilst

freeing them from all types of suffering, that is placing all sentient beings in the state of buddhahood. In this way you strongly develop the thought of benefiting other sentient beings by placing them into a state of buddhahood.

Firstly, focus upon your mother in this current life, and generate a strong sense of wishing to repay her kindness. Then extend this to all other sentient beings, including your enemies. In the commentary text there are clear instructions on how to do this.

For the test the compulsory question will be to explain the following verse from Chandrakirti's *Supplement To The Middle Way*.

"Hearers and middling realisers of suchness are born from the kings of subduers.

Buddhas are born from bodhisattvas.

The mind of compassion, non-dualistic understanding and the altruistic mind of enlightenment are the causes of children of conquerors."

We have discussed the meaning of this verse in the past, so you can do some further study on these lines.

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.

TARA INSTITUTE

STUDY GROUP DISCUSSION NIGHT - October 28 1997

Covering discourses 30/9/97 to 21/10/97

1. What is wrong with classifying some beings as friends and others as enemies?
2. What is the goal of the friend, enemy and stranger meditation?
3. Name the stages of the sevenfold cause and effect meditation for generating Bodhicitta.
4. What is the method to realise all beings as having been your mother? Explain the various reasons using analogies and quotes.
5. How can we establish the continuum of our own mind? Between yesterday and today or even between previous life and this one. How does examining our sense of 'I' and our mental attitudes help in answering this question?
6. The substance of our body comes from our parents, does our mind also come from our parents. Explain your reasoning.
7. What relationships have we had with other sentient beings in past lives? What attitude and behaviour do we have to other sentient beings when we have the realisation of seeing them as having been our mother?
What kindness has my present mother shown me? Explain at the different stages of your life - beginning, middle and end.
9. How do we do this meditation of remembering the kindness if we feel our mother has done us harm.
10. How can we repay the kindness of our mother? What is the ultimate benefit? Describe meditations that can cultivate our sense of personal responsibility to do this.

Compulsory Question

Discuss the meaning of the following lines from Chandrakirti text 'Supplement to the Middle Way'. Text is in book 'Compassion in Tibetan Buddhism' and in 'Compassion: a Tibetan analysis'.

Hearers and middling realisers
are born from the Kings of Subduers.
Buddhas are born from Bodhisattvas.
The mind of compassion, non-dual awareness,
And the altruistic mind of enlightenment
Are the causes of the Children of Conquerors

Mercy alone is seen as the seed
Of a Conqueror's rich harvest,
As water for development, and as
Ripening in a state of long enjoyment.
Therefore at the start I praise compassion.

YOU ARE IN GROUP

Tara Institute

Study Group Test - 4 November 1997

Covering discourses 30-9-97 to 21-10-97

Time allowed: 1 hr

Answer any 4 from questions 1 - 6.

Question 7 is compulsory.

1. What is wrong with classifying some beings as friends and others as enemies?
2. Name the stages of the sevenfold cause and effect meditation for generating Bodhicitta .
3. What is the method to realise all beings as having been your mother? Explain the various reasons using analogies and quotes.
4. The substance of our body comes from our parents, does our mind also come from our parents? Explain your reasoning.
5. What kindness has my present mother shown me? Explain at the different stages of your life - beginning, middle and end.
6. How can we repay the kindness of our mother? What is the ultimate benefit?

Describe meditations that can cultivate our sense of personal responsibility to do this .

Compulsory question

7. Discuss the meaning of the following lines from Chandrakirti's text 'Supplement to the Middle Way'.

"Hearers and middling realisers
are born from the Kings of Subduers.
Buddhas are born from Bodhisattvas.
The mind of compassion, non-dual awareness,
And the altruistic mind of enlightenment
Are the causes of the Children of Conquerors.