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

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering



ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅུངས།

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31 May 1994

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Try to generate bodhicitta motivation by thinking "I wish to achieve the state of buddhahood for the sake of all beings. For this purpose I am listening to the Lam Rim teachings and will put them into practice."

## Different Types Of Karma

In the last teaching we finished the differences between karma in terms of:

- propelling and completing karma
- definite and indefinite karma and
- done and accumulated karma

## Definite Karma: Three Types

Within Definite Karma, (that karma which will definitely be experienced) there are three subdivisions. These subdivisions are made in terms of the time when their results ripen:

1. karma which manifests its result in this life
2. karma which manifests its result in the life immediately after this one
3. karma which manifests its result in life after the immediate rebirth

The literal translations of these three karmas make their meaning clear. The literal meanings are:

1. Karma, the result of which can be seen. This means that this first type of karma produces its results in the same life as that in which the karma is created. The karma and its result occur in the same lifetime.
2. Karma, which produces its results in the immediate life after this one.
3. Karma, which produces its results not in the immediate life after but in any other life.

## Factors Determining Powerful Karma

In general those karmas which are very powerful belong to the first type of karma - that which produces its result in this very life. They are so powerful that they produce their result very quickly.

Powerful types of karma are of two types.

- a. Those which are created out of strong thoughts.
- b. Those karmas created in relation to a very potent or special object. Our spiritual teachers are such a supreme field because they possess a great number of qualities, and because they are our source of the attainment of spiritual qualities. Our parents can also be such a special object or field because they have given us great love and kindness.

Karma is powerful in terms of thought or motivation if we

perform spiritual practice out of the strong intention to show compassion to other beings and help them. Conversely committing any negative action out of strong harmful motivation is also powerful karma.

In addition to the above factors for creating powerful karma another factor is the frequency of the action. For example with a positive action like the practice of dharma, there is such delight that we keep practising even at the cost of other enjoyments. In this case the result of our dharma practice will definitely be experienced very soon.

So it can be seen that the powerful karmas produce their result more quickly than other types of karmas.

## The Order Of Ripening Of Karma

We may have accumulated various types of both virtuous and non-virtuous karma. How do we know which one of them will produce its result first? Will it be the virtuous or non-virtuous karma?

- a. The first factor which decides the ripening of the result is that heavy karma will produce its result first. If our virtuous karma is heavier than our non-virtuous karma, the virtuous karma will ripen its result first. However if the non-virtuous karma is heavier than the virtuous karma, then the non-virtuous karma will ripen first.
- b. If the amounts of virtuous and non-virtuous karma are even, the next factor to decide which ripens first is the karma with which we are most familiar. If we make effort to become used to virtuous or positive karma then it is likely that at death we shall have a virtuous mind, and therefore attain a better rebirth in the next lifetime.
- c. If both these factors are not applicable to determine the ripening there is a third factor. If the karma is equal in terms of being light or heavy and then equal in terms of being less or more familiar, then whichever karma is accumulated first will ripen first.

## Integrating Knowledge Of Karma Into Daily Practice

How does learning about these things help us to develop our spiritual practice?

Knowledge about karma shows us that it is very important for us to increase our familiarity with virtuous practice and to decrease our familiarity with non-virtuous activity. We must think of our own actions of body, speech and mind. If there is a very strong habitual thought of giving harm to other beings, we should replace it with the thought of helping and benefiting benefit other beings, for the sake of our spiritual practice.

Similarly we can look for any non-virtuous aspects to our outer actions of speech or body, such as bad manners, we should get

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rid of them. At the same time we should also familiarise ourselves with good speech and bodily actions. It is said that if we make a consistent effort to familiarise ourselves with virtuous thought and action, then almost effortlessly a good rebirth will be attained in the future.

If throughout our life we practise dharma, then at the time of death time it will be quite natural to think of practising dharma. At that moment of death such thoughts, and the positive qualities that accumulate in the mind are most beneficial since at that time there is nothing else which is of use. All other things - relatives, friends, wealth - fail to help us. They are of no use at that moment.

Earlier in these teachings we studied death and impermanence. We should always try to maintain awareness of death and impermanence. Death is certain but its time is uncertain. There is no guarantee that the old and sick will die before the young. The age at which death will occur is not certain. At the time of death all things other than dharma are meaningless. This gives us a strong motivation to put the dharma into daily practice.

We must relate what we study to our own dharma practice. The dharma or refuge object always makes sense within the context of our own mind. With dharma we naturally try to increase the positive qualities and get rid of all the negativities in our own mind.

As mentioned before if we maintain a positive state of mind at the time of death, at least the immediate life after will be a good and happy rebirth. To a large extent, having such a positive state of mind at the time of death depends upon our familiarity with virtue, which depends upon how we spend our time during our lifetime. At the time of death a very good practitioner will have a very happy state of mind. Death, for such a practitioner, will be anticipated with joy. A middling practitioner, at the moment of death will have no fear or nervousness. Lastly, a very small or lesser practitioner, will not feel regret about their death.

This leads us to realise that at this moment we have a wonderful opportunity in our hands. Of course it is worthwhile to utilise this life to study dharma. However the true benefit depends on putting it into practice. To practise means to relate what we study to our daily life. For example, in the study of karma we learn of need to abandon the ten non-virtuous actions, and to adopt the ten virtuous actions. Then as in teaching tonight, we studied the way in which the ripening of the result of karma depends upon the intensity of the karma. If the positive and negative actions are not equal, the heavier action produces its result first. Our level of familiarity with positive and negative actions also influences this order of ripening.

The practice of dharma means to check our own thoughts and actions with the knowledge of dharma. Consider, for example, the first of the ten non-virtuous actions - the action of killing and its opposite, not killing. We must compare the frequency and intensity with which we have thought about and completed both actions. In this way we are using our dharma knowledge to increase familiarity with virtuous actions. So our theoretical knowledge of dharma brings some benefit and change to our actions and state of mind. Study is beneficial, but study alone cannot calm the mind.

In order to develop more virtue within, we must make every effort to increase and maintain the positive states of mind, and to undertake positive actions. At the same time we must always rejoice in the merit of our virtuous actions. This is a

great cause to multiply the virtue we have already accumulated. If we then dedicate our virtue to some great purpose, that will seal the virtue so it is never lost.

To minimise non-virtue try to prevent non-virtuous thought. Even if a non-virtuous thought arises, every effort should be made to prevent that thought from becoming a non-virtuous action.

### **Opposing Negative Thoughts With Positive Thoughts**

Student: Many of the thoughts entering my mind are negative. Is there any way to stop these negative thoughts easily, as I find it difficult to stop the train of negative thoughts?

Geshe-la: You must think of the opposite of that negative thought. Depending on the type of habitual negative thought to which you are familiar, find out the positive thought that is its opposite. Then try to think of the conditions needed to cultivate those positive thoughts. Become familiar with that.

Shantideva said:

"There is no practice not made easier by familiarity"<sup>1</sup>

The recognition of the opposite, positive thought, and the effort to develop familiarity with that thought, minimises the original negative thought.

Furthermore Shantideva added to the above line with:

"Because something is very difficult or hard it should not be abandoned since there is nothing that is not easier with familiarity. Just as hearing someone's name can frighten one but later on that person can be so close that without them one cannot even live."

It is the same as hearing someone's name and initially being afraid, but later on that same person can become so close that life seems impossible without them. This shows how it is possible for the mind to change from one state to another. A thought seems natural and permanent, but with effort it can be changed. Difficulty is no reason to turn away from a task. Turning back will never lead to success in any activity.

Some business people, if they give up their endeavours they face difficulties even bankruptcy however they then make even more effort and thus gain some success. This gives pleasure. Because of this pleasure they can endure more hardships, even hunger.

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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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*The original typescript is prepared 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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<sup>1</sup>Bodhisattvacharyavatara chapter six verse fourteen

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## ལྷན་པོའི་རྣམ་གྲོལ་ལག་བཅུངས།

7 June 1994

As usual try to generate the appropriate motivation of bodhicitta.

### 422.122.2: The Specifics About The Law Of Karma<sup>1</sup>

ལས་འབྲས་བུ་བྱ་བ་ཏུ་བསམ་པ།

This has three subdivisions:

#### 422.122.21: The Ripened Qualities

རྣམ་སྒྲིབ་གྱི་ཡོན་ཏན།

#### 422.122.22: Their Functions

དེའི་བྱེད་ལས།

#### 422.122.23: The Causes To Achieve Them

དེའི་རྒྱ་བསྐྱབ་པ།

We are now up to the second main heading: The Specifics about the Law of Karma.

So far we have learnt that if we practise the morality of abandoning the ten non-virtuous actions we can obtain a higher status rebirth, which is in any of the higher realms. The form of life in higher realms is not necessarily suitable for successfully practising dharma. In order to practise dharma fully, a special higher rebirth, which is qualified by the eight ripening qualities, is required. Sometimes it is said to be qualified by the seven qualities of higher status<sup>2</sup> or the four vehicles (or wheels) of the supreme vehicle<sup>3</sup>. Regarding this Lama Tsong Khapa said:

In future unless one obtains the fully qualified form of life to engage in the supreme path, then one cannot be fully successful on the stages of the path.

Under the heading of The Specifics of Karma the text shows the causes which will help us to achieve those special qualities

<sup>1</sup>"Liberation.." p460 The title used in the text is " Thinking about some of the specifics"

<sup>2</sup>Joyful path of good fortune" p 131 "These seven advantages are:

nobility, great beauty, great resources, great power, great wisdom, good health and long life. Of these great wisdom is the most precious because it enables us to discriminate what is to be practised and what is to be abandoned and thus to follow correct spiritual paths."

<sup>3</sup>Liberation.. p313 The four wheels of the supreme vehicle refer to the right physical rebirth for the four classes of tantra.

which are necessary for a future good rebirth, and which will be qualified for the practice of dharma.

### 422.122.21: The Eight Ripening Qualities<sup>4</sup>

རྣམ་སྒྲིབ་གྱི་ཡོན་ཏན།

#### Their Order Of Presentation

A special form of happy rebirth is that which is qualified with the eight ripening qualities. The Lam Rim text:

- describes the eight ripening qualities;
- explains the benefits or functions of those qualities, and then
- the causes to obtain those eight qualities.

The reason why the text explains the eight qualities in this order, with the cause being explained after the result, is because knowing the benefits of those results might help to generate a strong wish to obtain those qualities. From this develops a strong motivation to create the causes. For this reason it is important to see the result, then to see whether there is the wish to obtain that result.

#### Generating The Motivation To Obtain The Eight Ripening Results

We should regard this human life as a ripened result of karma. Enjoying a long life span is one of the ripening qualities. The benefit of this ripening quality of long life span is the longer opportunity to practise dharma. Therefore a strong motivation is generated to create the causes, not only for a good rebirth as a human being, but also for good conditions in that human life e.g. a long life span. In this way we try to generate a motivation to create the cause to achieve those qualities.

Although we have these eight ripening qualities at the moment and enjoy the benefit of possessing those qualities, we must also think of the significance of having these qualities in future lifetimes. To achieve these same qualities in the future we must make an effort now to create the necessary causes.

One can also think "It is not that I am frightened of lower rebirth and so I create the cause for higher rebirth. Rather through fear of lower rebirth, I need to make an effort to create the cause for a better rebirth, which is the form of life fully suitable to practise dharma". In this way we ask "What is this very special rebirth that is fully suitable to practise dharma?" It is the one qualified by eight ripening qualities.

<sup>4</sup>Liberation..p460 The title used in the text is "The ripened qualities".

## Identifying The Ripened Qualities

These are the eight ripening qualities:

1. Excellent quality of life span.

ཚེ་རིང་ག།

2. Excellent quality of colour.

གཟུགས་བཟང་ག།

3. Excellent quality of race.

རིགས་མཐོ་ག།

4. Excellent quality of wealth.

དབང་ལྷུག་ཆེ་ག།

5. Excellent quality of speech.

ཚིག་བརྩན་པ།

6. Excellent quality of power.

དབང་ཆེ་བར་གྲགས་པ།

7. Excellent quality of being male.

སྐྱེས་པ་ཉིད་ཡིན་པ།

8. Excellent quality of healthy mind and body.

ལྷན་སེམས་སྟོབས་དང་ལྡན་པ་རྣམས།

Some of you might question why is "being male" included in this list of eight ripening qualities. Just because this is said here, is no reason to imply that Buddhism is prejudiced in matters of sexual gender, or that Lord Buddha was prejudiced towards women. In *The Heart Sutra* he mentions both men and woman. The text includes male and female by saying "son and daughter". Why then is "being male" said here? The reason is if you have to undertake a very secluded practice in an isolated place, then through being male there is less threat to one's life and especially less harm to the practice of morality. Mainly "being male" is in reference to this context.

Generally speaking, both men and women have a strong pride in their own gender. There are always some unnecessary conflicts because of this gender difference. If we look at the actual biology, and basic interests and concerns, some differences do exist. On the basis of these differences it is natural for men and women to have different views. What is most important, is that we do not take these gender differences to heart, and allow them to interfere with our closest relationships. It is more important to focus upon what we have in common, and on caring and helping each other. This minimises the importance of such differences.

## 1. Excellent Quality Of Life Span

ཚེ་རིང་ག།

In the past lives we have created the karmic cause to live a certain length of life. This is the life span that one is supposed to live in this current life. The length of life that we enjoy depends on the previous life leading up to this one. The meaning of excellent life span is to live to the end of the life span caused by the karma of the previous life.

Its benefit is to allow the practice of dharma, and work for the welfare of oneself and others, for a longer period of time. It is said that if we have a very short life, then any other qualities we may possess are not of much use. It is likened to putting ornaments on an animal which is on its way to be killed. There is no value in having those qualities.

## 2. Excellent Quality Of Colour Or Look

གཟུགས་བཟང་ག།

This means that physically one is attractive otherwise one becomes an object to be abused or put down by other people.

## 3. Excellent Quality Of Race Or Caste

རིགས་མཐོ་ག།

This quality has some relevance to ancient times in India. The Lord Buddha was born into a very high caste of his times. Because he belonged to such a high caste it was very much easier to attract more people and gain respect from others. In ancient India belonging to a lower caste family, whose profession was sweeper or cobbler, meant seclusion from other castes. Many of these social evils are now banned in India but it was not too long ago. Geshela recalled that in Varanasi some of the local people were not allowed in certain shops or buses. Indian leaders such as Jawarhal Nehru and Indira Gandhi did a lot to change these things. The late Indira Gandhi's mother was the first high caste lady to eat a meal from a very low caste family.

There was a time when, for the sake of maintaining caste, a father who found his son was about to marry a lower caste girl, would murder the girl before anyone found out. Such murders happened because the caste system was highly respected.

So you can clearly see the point that while such a practice exists, it is an advantage to be born in a higher caste since there is much more freedom to do what one wants.

## 4. Excellent Quality Of Wealth Or Resources

དབང་ལྷུག་ཆེ་ག།

Resources, wealth or even having a large number of friends can also be a further cause to gather or attract other people. Through this wealth and other resources it is possible that we can gather many others to follow us.

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## ལྷན་སྐྱེས་ལྷན་སྐྱེས་ལྷན་སྐྱེས་ལྷན་སྐྱེས་ལྷན་སྐྱེས་

14 June 1994

Try to reinforce your motivation by thinking that listening to these teachings will strengthen your practice to achieve Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings.

422.122.22: The Benefits Of The Ripening Qualities (cont.)

### དེའི་བྱེད་ལས།

Last week in our discussions we mentioned that to merely achieve an ordinary human life in the future is not enough. We need to achieve a special life which is qualified with the ripened qualities that make that life fully suitable for the practice of dharma. We then listed the eight ripened qualities and began to focus on the benefits of each one of them. We have finished the first four.

5. Excellent quality of speech - literally "gentle speech"

### ཚིག་བརྒྱན་པ།

This is being able to communicate with others in the most skilful way. The result is that other people develop trust in one's speech. Because of your great skill in communicating with others whatever you say accords with their needs. Whatever you say is very honest and truthful, with no hint of suspicion or deception. Therefore the listener believes in and trusts your speech. This skilful speech is an advantage since people will assemble to listen to your dharma teachings.

It is also said this ripened quality of gentle speech indicates the last three of the four means of gathering disciples.

The first is giving. The second is literally "pleasant speech" which means communicating according to the needs of the listeners. The third is being truthful to one's own speech i.e., not simply saying to others but also practising the same thing as you as you say to others. [Fourth is] always practising dharma.

In this way quality of gentle speech has the quality of ripening other beings.

1 These were also mentioned in the class of nineteenth April 1994 where a slightly different way of describing them was given..In the Wisdom Publications translation the four means of gathering disciples are mentioned on page 708 as:

1. Giving material things
2. Speaking sweetly to the people drawn to you
3. Teaching the disciples the path of the holy dharma according to their intelligence thus bringing them to train in its stages.
4. Practise what you preach

In some traditional texts we find these three qualities of knowledge:

- i. scholastic knowledge which enables one to be free from ignorance of dharma
- ii. perseverance which means always persevering in keeping the pure moral code through refraining from non-virtue
- iii. kindness which means always voluntarily extending benefit and help to other beings.

6. Excellent Quality Of Great Power

### དབང་ཆེ་བར་གྲགས་པ།

Great power does not mean to be very bossy or overpowering to those under one's control. Rather two meanings are indicated here:

- i. Power in controlling the mind which enables us to help many others. To a large extent people judge others on how they live and what they have accomplished. In this context accomplishment refers to spiritual qualities. Someone with very good self control is in a good position to help others
- ii. Power arising from reputation. Having enriched yourself with great inner qualities such as generosity, to the point where you become very well known to many others because of these spiritual qualities, you become famous. Because of this fame, which you achieved by development of your own spiritual practice, you are seen as a worthy object of veneration and a source of spiritual help. People feel great gratitude to you since you are a person with full qualifications to help others.

Whether you take great power to mean great power in controlling yourself, or in the sense of your reputation for possessing spiritual qualities which help others, others are drawn to you with trust and faith, and without any force. They become more receptive to what you say.

It is just like the orders of a king or a government, which are followed without any hesitation. With this quality of great power, whatever your advice or help others will follow it.

7. Excellent Quality Of Being Male

### ཞུས་པ་ཉིད་ཡིན་པ།

The text says that the advantage of being male is that you can live in a crowd without fear and live alone with fewer obstacles or hindrances. This explanation specifically refers to someone who wants to live as a sangha. Having become sangha [this quality] enables one to live with more confidence and courage but face less obstacles. In brief the benefit of this quality is having more courage and fewer obstacles to practising dharma.

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## 8. Excellent Quality Of Strong Mind And Body

### ལུས་སེམས་རྣམས་དང་ལྡན་པ།

The advantage of having a strong body, which is one free of any disease and is healthy, is that a great deal of hardship in practising dharma can be tolerated. Lama Tsong Khapa performed a great number of physical prostrations mainly because of the strength of his body. Therefore he was in a position to accumulate merit and practise dharma.

Mental strength means that in all circumstances great spirit, interest and joy in practising dharma is maintained. With strong mind and body one can achieve the union of calm abiding and special insight and any other clairvoyant power much faster. With a very strong mind, you can tolerate all hardships and remain very consistent with your perseverance in the practice. You will not be discouraged and lose interest by thinking that despite all past efforts you still feel that you have not achieved your goal or fulfilled the wishes of your guru. Thinking that way causes you to lose the confidence to continue the same practice in the future. With this quality of strong mind and body that will not happen. To achieve even a very mundane purpose you need a strong body and strong mental determination to succeed. So, too, this quality of strong healthy body and mind is a great advantage in making quick progress on the spiritual path.

#### 422.122.23: The Causes To Achieve Them

### དེའི་རྒྱ་བསྐྱབ་པ།

Studying the eight ripened qualities we may lead to the thought that possessing those eight qualities is certainly of real benefit. However there may be doubt about whether we shall have those eight qualities in the future. There is no need to have such doubt. Farmers sow seed now without any doubt that there will later be a harvest. Similarly if we assemble the causes for those eight qualities now, there is no doubt that we shall possess them in the future. It is like a cause of nature, in that when all the causal conditions are gathered together, the result is automatic.

At the moment we are in the most fortunate position to practise dharma and there is no better, no more suitable time to practise dharma than what we have now.

#### The Causes For Attaining Long Life

The causes for obtaining long life are to refrain from any action of killing other beings and to engage in actions of saving the lives of others, e.g., those beings just about to be killed. Other causes are giving food to others and helping prisoners to be free from prison.

End of discourse.

Geshe-la: What are the six perfections and the four means of gathering disciples?

Students: six perfections:

giving; morality; patience; joyful effort; concentration; wisdom

four means of gathering disciples:

giving material objects; speaking sweetly; teaching dharma; live by your words

#### Benefits Of Sleeping In The Lion Posture

Student 1: What are the benefits of sleeping in the Lion Posture?

Geshe-la: The reason why lying on the side position with your head on your (right) hand is called the lion position is because when a lion goes to sleep in this position he does so in a very relaxed manner without any fear. When other animals see a lion sleeping they cannot go near it. Similarly sleeping in that position has the benefit of stopping bad dreams and some other obstacles to dharma practice.

That lion posture also resembles the posture in which Shakyamuni Buddha passed away so we sleep in that position to remember the life story of Lord Buddha.

#### Men, Women And Courage

Student 2: How can being a male bring more courage?

Geshe-la: Courage means a sense of no fear. It is said that in order to hear all the dharma teachings, the suitable listener should have no fear. This is not so much the case now, but in some cases people listen to teachings, then get scared and lose their sense of calm and relaxation. In reference to this it is said that the male body has some biological advantage.

Student 3: How does the male body have some biological advantage?

Geshe-la: Geshe-la is not sure but it is possible that now the female spirit might have developed. In earlier times there was such an obvious difference where females were so soft and gentle that they were not in a position to do certain things. This has something to do with the nature of the female mind. The nature of the female mind is more gentle and soft so there is more kindness and loving feelings. The male mind is more rough and wild. This is why men were sent to war. Of course in reality we do not know their feelings but at least outwardly they go to the front line of war. Whether this is because of bravery or not may be questionable.

#### Self Esteem And "Stage-Fright"

Also this has a lot to do with the quality of self esteem when giving teachings to others. You may know the subject thoroughly but without self esteem, courage or confidence you become nervous and this obstructs you from giving the teachings fully. If you think of giving a lecture to a big crowd, the fear and nervousness experienced by looking at that crowd may cause you to forget everything despite your preparation. Holding one's mind on the subject matter rather than focussing on faces of the people in the crowd will help with that problem. Otherwise you may see in the crowd a very learned person, or perhaps a person who is not right for those teachings. Rather just focus on the subject matter of your talk, and if talking about dharma then focus on your motivation. Even in monasteries there are many monks, even high scholars, who have this difficulty. Some can not even stand in front of a crowd of thousands. This is due to fear, or a lack of courage which prevents them from rising and debating in front of that big crowd. Therefore we need that quality of courage to be able to give teachings to a large number of beings.

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21 June 1994

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Make sure that your motivation for listening to these teachings is to achieve the full state of enlightenment for the sake of all living beings.

**Motivation Itself As A Dharma Practice**

Before engaging in any practice make sure that right from the beginning the motivation with which the practice is commenced is pure dharma. In this way we are always reminded to adopt a right frame of mind or motivation.

This implies that right from the beginning we need to transform our state of mind, which means to transform our motivation. If it is to gain fame and reputation then this is a wrong motivation. If it is to compete with another or through jealousy, that too is a very wrong frame of mind. If we hold such negative states of mind in us, then no matter what practice we do, or for how long, it will not calm the mind. Since it does not diminish negativities it is not a mahayana practice nor is it even dharma practice.

Whenever we engage in dharma practice we have to always make sure that it is countering our own negative states of mind. The motivation that we say at the beginning is a practice of dharma. What negative state of mind does it counter? The bodhicitta mind helps us to be rid of the self-cherishing mind. If we always place the focus of our practice on our own mind, developing its positive qualities and decreasing the negative ones then we gain real benefit from the practice that we do.

**Dharma As Transformation Of The Mind**

The practice of dharma is actually no other than changing our own mind from negative to positive states. We have to realise a lot of our difficulties are the result of our own thought processes, or way of thinking. If we change our way of thinking, the difficulty or problem is automatically solved.

The question as to whether dharma is beneficial or not, is answered by knowing how a state of mind can be replaced by different ways of thinking. It is a lot easier to solve emotional problems than those related to our physical body. Recovering from a physical disease may be very expensive. This is not the case when the problem is associated with our ways of thinking.

**422.122.23: The Causes Of The Eight Ripened Qualities (Cont)**

དེའི་རྒྱ་བསྐྱབ་པ།

So far we have seen that by practising the ten virtuous actions and discarding the ten non-virtuous actions we can obtain higher rebirth. To take full advantage of this rebirth, we need to obtain a higher rebirth endowed with eight ripened qualities. From this point we went on to recognise the eight ripened qualities and the benefits of each of these eight qualities. Knowing that those eight are obtainable then we need to know the causes of those eight qualities. This is the current subject.

**The Causes Of Long Life (And Freedom From Disease)**

We have finished the first ripened quality which is enjoying long life. The main causes are preventing harmful actions to other beings; refraining from killing other beings and saving or releasing any being from death; being very generous to other beings; helping any prisoners to be released from prison. These are some of the main causes to achieve long life.

As part of showing the causes of long life the text also shows the causes for freedom from any diseases in the future. It is said that the best cause to be free from disease in the future is to help others suffering from disease. This help may be in the form of providing food, medicine or just company. Practising helpful actions to anyone (and especially to one's friends and those close to us) particularly when they face such diseases, is very much in accord with the practice of dharma. The practice of dharma is to benefit others. To benefit others at a most needed time is even more beneficial. Imagine being hospitalised and helped by a friend. You would never forget the kindness of that friend.

For everyone of us the time will come when we shall be sick and end up in hospital. If at such a time friends are very helpful, we shall be very grateful to them. Similarly when friends are in difficulty we shall show concern and affection for them. As a direct result, even in this immediate life, we shall have friends to help us when we are in need. In addition we have also created causes to always have help from others, and to be free from problems such as diseases in future lives.

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## **The Benefits Of Serving Others**

In this Lam Rim teaching, we find advice not only for future lives but for everything in this life as well. The teaching shows the benefit of serving others, including friends and especially one's parents. Because of the amount of love parents give to us, it is very important for us to repay that love and kindness by serving them. In Tibet, when children grow up, they regard it as a great opportunity to find a moment to serve their parents. If they miss that opportunity they experience regret for their whole life. If we cannot serve all other beings at least we must serve those who are closest to us. Why do we call someone a friend? When do we regard ourselves as their friend? "Friend" means to be helping the other person to eliminate problems and to create the causes of happiness. If we do this then we are a real friend. If we cause harm to them, they will regard us as an enemy or a bad friend. Try to realise that the whole point to being friends in this life is to help each other to be rid of suffering and to create happiness in this life. A future life friend is one who helps us find a better life and conditions in the future.

## **The Causes Of A Good Physical Appearance**

The causes of a good physical appearance in the future include being patient; minimising anger; offering butter lamps or light to any holy objects; actually making or restoring holy objects; painting gold or silver on holy objects; offering clothes or ornaments to holy objects. It is also said that giving any new clothing to another being as a gift is a cause for beauty.

## **The Causes Of Being Born In A High Caste**

The causes of being born in a high caste include not having pride or being proud of any qualities which one might have, e.g., being born in a high caste, one's practice of morality, one's knowledge, social position, status, wealth or power, etc. To not feel pride in any of this is a cause to be reborn in high caste in the future.

## **Social Stability Through Mutual Respect**

The other cause to be reborn in a high caste in the future is to show respect to one's teachers, parents and to all those who are older and more senior to oneself. This also indicates that if you are part of the sangha community, you need to respect your own vows or moral code but also respect the vows of other friends.

Just as we learnt earlier of the benefit of serving those patients who suffer from disease, now we learn to respect elders. This practice is a very important cause for more peace, harmony and happiness in the whole nation. One major factor influencing the cause of happiness and suffering in a nation as a whole is the relationship between older and younger generations or between parent and child. If this relationship is good, there is mutual benefit. If the older generation enjoys good relationships with their children or young ones, then no matter how long they live they find enjoyment, and no

moments of loneliness. There is so much unhappiness when they do not enjoy a good relationship with their children. In the same way some of the younger generation experience great suffering because of the lack of support and guidance from the older generation. It is very important that those who are older, or who have more knowledge and experience, not take pride in this or look down on others. Rather the older generation should be very kind and helpful to others. Younger people must see that their elders have helped them because it is their duty or responsibility. Just as it is a parental responsibility to support children, so it is children's responsibility to support parents in old age when they need company. Nothing should jeopardise the relationship between parents and their children because both benefit from it.

It is very sensible to say that younger ones should respect and obey their elders, and the elders should show kindness, love and support to younger ones. There is a mutual benefit in this and a great contribution to general peace and harmony in the country as well.

End of discourse.

Next Tuesday is discussion night. Geshe-la advises us to make discussion very relaxing, comfortable and free for everyone. Since we are going very slowly with these teachings you do not need to feel that in discussion time you must use only these Lam Rim topics. You can use any topic not necessarily directly related, but which is very beneficial to discuss.

The compulsory question:

"How does one's meditation help one's mind?"

You must expand this question by first showing what meditation means, then how to meditate, and the purpose of meditation. If the purpose is to counteract something, you must then identify positively what is to be counteracted and the remedy to be applied. What helps to improve or develop one's concentration in meditation is another aspect. These questions are not included in the main question, but they are the things you need to consider in your answer.

Often people ask Geshe-la what sort of meditation he does and how he does it. When we answer this compulsory question, we should do so as if we were replying to someone asking us this question. So you need to reply in such a way as to answer the question so it is as clear as possible to others.

Geshe-la says to try your best to write your answers in the exam.

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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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