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

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering



ལྷན་སྐྱོད་ཀྱི་ལྷན་སྐྱོད་ལྷན་སྐྱོད་ལྷན་སྐྱོད་

17 October 1995

Ensure that you generate the right motivation.

We are discussing the six primary, or root, delusions. Of the six primary delusions, last time we discussed attachment, and also the meditational remedy to counteract that desire.

422.221.111.2: 2nd Root Delusion: Anger

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The next root delusion is anger. In order to overcome anger we need to know not only the antidote, but also all the disadvantages of anger.

Although desire, which is the thought of wanting things, can result in great dissatisfaction in our life, it is not something which we always see as a negative state, since it can sometimes become a temporary source of pleasure. Anger, on the other hand, has no such effect. Whether it be directly or indirectly, if anger dominates or is present in the mind, it will always bring disturbance to us and other people.

Seeing all the drawbacks of anger, we need to generate the strong motivation to be rid of it; not allowing the mind, or our actions, to be overpowered by it. We must make every effort to remove it, because if anger arises in the mind we know the result will be a great unhappiness and loss to ourselves, and those around us. So we should try to take countermeasures as soon as possible, and generate the prayer, "May I not be overpowered by anger." To enjoy lasting peace and happiness in the mind, it is essential to try to free ourselves from the influence of anger.

Anger Is Easier To Overcome Than Desire

The difference between anger and desire is that anger is easier to recognise as a negative state. Also the remedy to overcome anger is easier than the remedy to overcome desire. It is said that desire can take over the mind just like a drop of oil on a piece of cloth; it can spread right through the cloth and be very difficult to remove. Once desire is generated in the mind it is hard to see its disadvantages. The longer it remains in our mind, the more firmly it becomes entrenched, and this makes it extremely difficult to overcome. Whereas with anger, if we make some effort it is easy to see all its drawbacks,

and we can reduce it more easily than attachment.

Relating The Teachings On Anger To Our Own Life

The most important thing for our spiritual development or progress is applying the teachings to our own life. Simply studying on an intellectual level is not making any real progress in spiritual terms; because then our knowledge of the disadvantages of anger is used merely to blame others for lacking patience or being short tempered, and so on. Often when we are under the influence of anger, we accept it and find some excuse, so there is no benefit from our knowledge. So as we learn of disadvantages of anger, we must try to relate this knowledge to our own life, and then make an effort to apply the meditation that will reduce the anger within.

If we recognise the faults of anger in terms of the consequences of our own actions, then our understanding of those faults will become clearer. We can see how, within the context of our own actions, we lose self-control when under the influence of anger. Recollect a situation when your mind was overpowered by anger, and try to see how the driving force of that anger forced you to undertake actions which would normally be unwanted ones.

Seeing what anger does to yourself, we can then see how, when a close friend comes under the control of anger, that their loss of control is not necessarily intended personally but comes through the force of anger. In this way we can practise tolerance. As a result of this we see how overcoming anger, and developing tolerance, has an immediate benefit to our life.

The Nature And Object Of Anger

If anger has many faults, what then is the nature and object of anger?

The nature of anger is a very gross state of mind, that has an attitude of holding resentment, or even wanting to harm others.

There are two objects of anger: animate things and inanimate things.

These inanimate things include not only those outer or external objects, which serve as a cause of pain or dissatisfaction, but also one's own pain, discomfort or unwanted feelings.

Thus the object of anger is not necessarily something very tangible which can be seen with our eyes or heard with our ears and so on - it can even be the discomfort we experience in life.

However not knowing that your own unhappiness or pain is also a cause of anger, can mean that some people feel that they have no control of their temper - they feel angry at everything. When asked "At what are you angry?", there is no specific object. Because we have this life and body, which has the nature of suffering and which can give rise to suffering, the cause to give rise to anger is always present.

If we perceive objects as very beautiful then attachment or desire arises in our mind, but when the object appears as very ugly to us, then we generate anger. It is almost automatic, that whenever we perceive an object as unattractive or unpleasant, anger arises within, and as mentioned before, with anger in our mind there is no room for inner peace or happiness.

Therefore we must explore what our life would be like if we did not control emotions like desire and anger. Individually it will be very unstable, and our relationships with the people around us will also be very unstable and unpredictable. Desire arises when we see our friend as very attractive and pleasant, and so want to be very close to them. On the other hand, when we see something unwanted in that friend we generate anger, and this creates actions which will distance us from that friend. Throughout our life if we generate anger one day, and attachment the next, then we are caught in some unsolvable confusion. Not only does it make our life unhappy and miserable but we cause the same misery to others: we cause pain to a close friend for instance.

So it is important to ask ourselves the question "Is there any good in showing anger to others, even when someone shows anger to me?" According to the worldly way of dealing with things the way to win over an enemy is to retaliate successfully. Of course it is not very worthwhile or wholesome to do so, but that is the way we see things. However we cannot do the same to someone very close to us. Even if they show anger to us, we cannot retaliate like we would with an enemy. Rather we have to think of showing tolerance, because that helps everyone.

Is there any advantage in showing anger even in terms of our own benefit? When we look carefully we see that there are no advantages whatsoever. If we don't control anger it will bring misery and harm to both our own, and our friend's life, and that will damage our relationship. Then how would your life be, with no-one close to you and supporting you? Because our life is one of interdependence it is a very harmonious relationship with the people and friends around us that brings most peace and pleasure in our life.

As well as seeing that spiritual practice has benefits in future lives, we must also see its benefits for this life.

When we see that we will be practising the spiritual teachings in this life, and at the same time creating the causes for benefit in future lives. Practising tolerance and patience towards a friend in this life, not only brings happiness now, but also creates causes for happiness in future lives.

In the *Bodhisattva Charyavatara* Shantideva said: "There is no non-virtue like hatred, and no ascetic practice or hardship like patience."¹

The first Dalai Lama His Holiness Gendun Drup said "Anger takes away the life of liberation and higher rebirth." In this way we should first try to understand all the benefits of practising tolerance, and the shortcomings of anger at a very gross or obvious level, then we can go into detail about the sort of meditation technique to develop patience and to overcome anger.

Firstly we must transform ourselves into a more stable happy and peaceful person, and then we can naturally help others. If we do not practise ourselves then our own life will be very unsettled and unhappy, and therefore cause harm to others.

If we practise tolerance, and the right way of thinking, then it is natural not to retaliate to someone who is trying to harm you. Staying calm, and showing a very friendly gesture forces them to change their attitude and to smile back at you. If we fully utilise our discriminating mind about what is most beneficial and harmful to ourself, then on the basis of this discriminating knowledge you seek the right way of living, which can bring joy, happiness, and stability in life.

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¹ *Bodhisattva Charyavatara* chapter 6 verse 2

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ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅངས།

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Generate the bodhicitta motivation by thinking that the teachings, which you receive and put into practice, are for the attainment of the state of Buddhahood, for the sake of all sentient beings.

Benefits of the Bodhicitta Motivation

We should always think of the benefits and preciousness of generating bodhicitta - this altruistic mind of enlightenment - for it is the essence of all the spiritual instructions, or teachings. The more we know about the benefits of this bodhicitta mind, the more we shall cherish this altruistic feeling towards others. And the more we cultivate this altruism, or loving kindness towards others, the more our self-cherishing mind will diminish. Then, as our self-cherishing mind diminishes, we shall find more happiness in our mind, and able to extend our help to other beings, instead of hurting them. Realising the benefits of this bodhicitta mind, try to motivate all actions with this bodhicitta, whether the action be listening to dharma, or giving the dharma teachings to others. In fact, because the mind precedes all actions, any action motivated by a bodhicitta mind will be the source of benefit, joy and happiness for all living beings. This is the essence of the Buddha's teachings and it ensures that our actions will become a Mahayana practice. Needless to say, it is all in our own hands, so we have to be very careful about the thoughts which lead our actions.

Obtaining Benefit from Dharma Practice

Each individual must practice dharma to obtain any benefit from it, because just simply learning about dharma will not bring any more happiness, or benefit to our life. The practice of dharma means overcoming or counteracting the self-cherishing mind. This mind is like an inner enemy, and it is the source of all our problems. The more self-cherishing there is within us, the more problems there are in our life. On examination when we complain 'I am not feeling well.' 'This is going wrong!' 'That is going wrong!', all these problems generally derive from the self-cherishing mind, which brings us all our past, present and future problems.

We are born as a human being, but if this precious human rebirth is marred by the overwhelming experience of physical and mental suffering, then what is the use of it? What is the use of wealth and the friends

we possess? What use is this life if there is no happiness in the mind, and no happiness in sound physical health?

The real meaning of life is having such happiness in both the mind and body. We can see that our efforts in finding food, clothing, shelter and a good name are not enough, because they do not secure that happiness which we seek in life. So we must not only learn about dharma, but we must also put it into practice so that we can minimise this self-cherishing mind. When we do this, we can see the benefit within this life, and at the same time we are actually practising dharma. It is said that if we follow the practice of dharma then all the other comforts of life will come about. It is like when a horse is galloping. Without the intention on the part of the horse, a cloud of dust will rise behind it. It is just natural. In the same way if we generate faith in the dharma, then the more time we spend in dharma, the more this faith will increase. But this faith will not increase if we do not make an effort to practise dharma. If only our knowledge of dharma increases, then despite spending large amounts of time with dharma, as time goes by we develop more doubt in our mind which is very incorrect.

If we practise dharma in this life, then whatever practice with which we are familiar in this life will have the same influence in future lives. Just as in this present life, people have different tendencies because of their state of being in previous lives. Some have tendency of strong desire; others of patience towards things. Therefore try to realise that even the effort which we make in studying, is for the purpose of putting it into practise, and the purpose of that is to make progress in dharma.

Loneliness Arises from Self Cherishing

Consider the problem of loneliness, and a situation where you are separated from a friend. In such a case your feeling of being rejected by your friend is also very strong. That is because the feeling of wanting that friend is very strong. Why do you have this thought of wanting something? The cause is self cherishing.

HH the Dalai Lama said 'Human intelligence is a great mechanism.' This means that if we use our intelligence constructively, we shall create a particularly beneficial thing. At the same time however, if we misuse it, then great destruction can be the result. We are not like animals with limited intelligence or scope, and thus a

limited potential. As human beings we all have this human intelligence, and discriminating mind. What is most important is utilising it in the most beneficial or constructive way.

The Potential of Our Human Mind

Whenever we face a situation, our response to that situation depends upon how we use our human mind. If our response to various situations uses negative and destructive ways, then we bring more loss to ourselves and others. That is misusing the human mind.

Think of how often we misuse our human mind in our daily life. For instance if there are others with whom we have a close relationship - parents, close relatives, close friends - and they use harsh words. How should we respond? In general what is our immediate response? Of course when we forget our practice, our normal response is to retaliate. We even give thought as to how best to retaliate. This kind of thought process is misusing the human mind, and responding with an angry face, with abuse, and with harsh speech does not show any patience.

Think of how the human mind or intelligence is misused, and how, as a result of this, a small war leads to a bigger one. In response to a rifle being fired, there are missiles or very explosive bombs. The result of all this is more destruction and suffering in the world.

Think of how our moods change in our day-to-day life. One moment we are happy, and the next very unhappy. This change, and all the suffering which comes in life, all derive mainly from our own actions and thoughts. If in our daily life and dealings with others, there is more dharma, then it means we shall be more tolerant to others - even to those who hate us. Then the conduct of our actions is very wholesome and positive. The natural result of this is that we find ourselves in harmony in our relationships with others who will be more friendly, and who will admire us.

It is very easy to identify the difference between a kind mind or person, and an ill-minded or evil-minded person. With a kind mind not only will you always be grateful to those who have been helpful, but you will also want to show your gratitude, by extending more help to them than they extended to you. Also with a kind mind, you will have more tolerance to any harm or unhappiness that is caused by others.

As no-one is perfect, this practice of tolerance is very important if we want a lasting relationship with others, and more mutual benefits in a relationship. Without a kind mind, when someone causes you a loss then you want to them to experience an even greater loss. Then if someone lends you \$100, then let alone returning the \$100, or even giving them \$200 or \$300 back, you completely forget about their offering. This mind needs to be changed. We must change our mind from negative to positive; from non-virtuous to virtuous. After all, spiritual practice is to cultivate positive states of mind

such as loving kindness - something which is respected in the world. For an individual that is the true practice, and it is a source of joy for ourselves and all other beings.

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31 October 1995

Generate bodhicitta by thinking that for the sake of all sentient beings, I want to achieve the perfect state of buddhahood, which is free of all faults but possessing all excellent qualities. It is out of this motivation that we engage in study and practice of the Stages of the Path.

422.221.111.3: Third Root Delusion - Pride

ད་རྒྱུ་ལ།

We have been discussing the six root, or primary delusions. Having finished the first two, we go now to the third root delusion of pride and look at its definition, and the means to overcome it.

The Difference between Pride and Courage

Before going into any detail, we must discuss how what we call pride is different from courage or spirit. Often people confuse these two as being the same. Unless we know the difference between pride and courage, it is hard to see pride as a delusion, and therefore as something negative.

Courage is not the same as pride. The term courage means the ability, or confidence, to do things. For instance someone with courage will not have any nerves, or anything which discourages them from doing things. Without courage, for instance, if you had to give a lecture to a crowd, a lack of confidence/spirit/courage stops you from giving the lecture, even if you have all the necessary knowledge and skills. There is some type of fear stopping you from giving that lecture. Therefore people must have confidence and courage, otherwise they cannot make use of their qualities, knowledge and skills.

Pride, on the other hand, means looking down on other people with a feeling of superiority, because of one's qualities, wealth or physical outlook, or even having a pleasant voice. Pride is not something to be valued as it is a hindrance, or an obstacle.

The Faults of Pride

To overcome pride one must see all its faults. The whole purpose of the Buddha's teachings to others is to guide them to eliminate all their delusions, and negative states of mind. Thus, this teaching on pride should be related to one's own self. Using the teaching just to stimulate intellectual knowledge, and then to put others down accusingly saying 'You are arrogant!' only serves to increase our delusions, rather than to reduce them. Then the teachings will have no benefit to our life.

With strong pride in ourselves we won't make much

progress, since we shall feel 'I know everything!'. Thinking like this, then our attitude will always be one of belittling others. Also, due to pride we belittle others, thus creating more gaps between ourselves and others. They will not like it if your attitude is arrogant, even if they are your friends. Seeing others as very low and inferior makes for distance between yourself and others. Then you will not show any true love and compassion to others. Therefore pride is an obstacle to the generation of good heart to others. Needless to mention then, that pride is an obstruction to the attainment of the highest state of enlightenment.

Knowing the true purpose of studying dharma (which is to diminish all delusions), one's study of dharma and of meditation should be examined for the existence of pride. As said in sutra 'If we have pride, then there are no good results of practising dharma.' Even giving teachings to others through pride, will be of no benefit for the teacher, and it is very unlikely to benefit others in a true sense. It is like placing food in a filthy container. So pride is an obstacle to producing the bodhicitta mind, as well as an immediate cause of personal unhappiness.

Therefore, depending upon our own level and capacity, whatever we learn in the teachings, and whatever meditations we practise, we should aim at minimising the negative states of mind in ourselves. Then we shall gain true benefits from our learning, and as we make true progress in our practice, our negative states of mind become less and we shall see more peace and happiness within.

Pride can also bring unnecessary problems and disturbance to the mind. For example in a class if some students have strong pride in their performance, then not only can they be very competitive and negative towards others, but also if there is someone doing better than them in the class, they feel very upset and their mind cannot rest and relax. If it is very intense they can even become very quite madly obsessed.

Therefore you must ask yourself 'What is the value of generating pride in our achievements?' If we examine very carefully, with an understanding of what is meant by pride, (which is different from courage, spirit or confidence) then we can see how pride will serve as a source of mental restlessness, even if we succeed in our goal.

If attaining our goal becomes a source of more restlessness, is it worthwhile then to have it? Would it not be better to enjoy peace and happiness in the mind, and not worry about other things, like other peoples' opinions of our achievements.

Sustaining deep peace and happiness in our mind is what we are seeking throughout life, so knowing the difference between pride and courage is important. Pride is something very negative and serves as a cause of unhappiness but courage is a cause for accomplishing things, and is of benefit to all.

In our experience these two are mixed together so, in order to see all the faults of pride we must see pride as a mental factor which is completely different from courage. Since courage is very positive and completely different from pride, by separating them we shall not see courage as a part of pride, and thus believe there is anything positive in pride.

The Antidote to Pride

In order to overcome pride it is recommended that one should turn one's attention towards subjects with which one is unfamiliar. For example, studying the various divisions of all the objects of knowledge can help to overcome pride. It is said that to look for unknown subjects you do not have to look far away. If you look at your physical composites from the tip of your hair down to your toes, you see that your knowledge of its complex reality is very limited, and that you are very unfamiliar with it. Therefore this contemplation on subjects with which one is unfamiliar is a remedy to pride.

Questions and Answers

In the twelve links of interdependent origination the second link, karmic formations forms these contaminated aggregates.

Geshe-la: Concerning the truth of cessation and the truth of the path, is the truth of cessation a result, and is the truth of the path a cause?

Student: Yes

Geshe-la: Is it permanent?

Student: Yes

Geshe-la: If it is permanent, how can it be a result since it must rely on a cause?

Concerning the truth of cause of suffering and the truth of suffering, is there one example which can be both of them - since they are mutually exclusive?

Student: Yes.

Geshe-la: What?

Student: Any delusion.

Geshe-la: Are all delusions the truth of the cause and the truth of suffering? Are the delusions in continuum of a higher bodhisattva, the truth of the cause and the truth of suffering?

In terms of stages of spiritual development, it is only when a bodhisattva reaches the eighth level that a bodhisattva abandons all delusions, but before that they can have delusions in their continuum.

Even some ordinary beings can be born in a pure land, but is there truth of suffering in a pure land? A pure land is pure of something, of what is it pure?

Student: Is it possible to have delusions in your continuum, and still experience suffering?

Geshe-la: In other words the extent to which any delusions can influence us, depends upon our capacity to overpower or counteract those delusions. As the main cause of delusions is ignorance, which misconceives the ultimate mode of existence of all things, then in the case of a superior or arya being - who has direct perception of the ultimate truth of selflessness - that arya being has overpowered the delusions.

Although they may have some delusions and some ignorance it cannot influence their actions so arya beings do not face any result, or effect which results from the force of delusions e.g. birth and death by the force of karma and delusions. Rather it is said that when one reaches the state of an arya or superior being, even if you choose to live in cyclic existence for the benefit of others and take countless numbers of lives, these cycles of lives are not caused by karma and delusions but by the bodhisattva's love and compassion. In this cycle of birth and death this bodhisattva does not undergo suffering, unlike ordinary sentient beings.

When you definitely realise the ultimate truth of selflessness, this ignorance which has been controlling your destiny loses all its power, and control over you. It is like when a king's empire or kingdom is taken over by a some enemy. Even if the king is still alive, he has no power over the affairs of state. Similarly when we are deeply asleep all other consciousnesses become inactive, and can have no influence upon us. The deep sleep state overpowers all other states of consciousness.

In this way all types of delusions, or even all types of ignorance or self grasping, are not necessarily the truth of the cause of suffering. The truth of the cause of suffering refers mainly to the types of delusion and karma which are included in the twelve links - the twelve independent originations. Of these twelve links of independent origin, the truth of cause of suffering is mainly the first link - Ignorance. Of the twelve links - three are delusions - 1: Ignorance, 8: Craving, 9: Grasping. Two are karma - 2: Karmic Formations and 10: Existence. These five are not only the cause of suffering but are also suffering. Whereas the 4th link - Name and Form - is the truth of suffering but not the cause of suffering

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7 November 1995

To generate the motivation of bodhicitta think of reaching the state of full enlightenment or buddhahood for the sake of all beings, and that it is for this reason that you engage in the practise of the stages of the path.

The source of all inner enemies are the delusions. There are six primary or root delusions, of which we have finished the first three - attachment, anger and pride - so do not forget about your study of these three.

422.221.111.4 Fourth Root Delusion - Ignorance

མ་རིག་པ།

The fourth root delusion is ignorance, which in Tibetan is *ma-rig-pa*. The first syllable *ma* is the negative term and *rig-pa* means to know or to understand. So literally the word *ma-rig-pa* means not knowing or not understanding. Here however, *ma-rig-pa* refers to a mental factor which prevents the mind from seeing things as they are, or which clouds the view of the ultimate mode of existence of things.

So ignorance is the delusion which obscures or clouds our mind, and prevents it from seeing the law of cause and effect, the three refuge objects, and so on. It is this particular ignorance which is the root cause of all the other delusions.

Ignorance and Wrong View - two different approaches

With respect to the identification of ignorance, the earlier Indian masters had two views. According to one system, ignorance is identified as being the same as the wrong view of transitory collections¹. The early masters who assert this view include Nagarjuna, Chandrakirti and Vasubhandu.

The other system asserted by the early masters such as Asanga and Dharmakirti define this deluded ignorance and the view of transitory collections separately. They explained that ignorance is like a dullness which obstructs our mind from seeing the truth, and due to that ignorance we then generate the wrong view of transitory collections. For example, at dusk when the light is fading, we might mistake a coiled rope as a snake. This misconception of seeing a coiled rope as a snake is like the view of transitory collections. The reason why such wrong views occur in our mind, is because of the ignorance which prevents us from seeing the true reality of what is there. Therefore ignorance and wrong view are defined separately.

The reason why we misconceive that coiled rope as a snake is because of the darkness. Similarly the reason why we generate

such a wrong view of transitory collections is because of some kind of dullness which clouds our mind. Thus from the point of view of differentiating between ignorance and wrong view, we see that ignorance is the root cause which is responsible for giving way to wrong views in the mind, such as the wrong view of transitory collections.

However all the early scholars agreed that the view of selflessness, or the wisdom of selflessness is the antidote or remedy to ignorance: this will be discussed later under the topic of special insight.

422.221.111.5 Fifth Root Delusion - Afflicted Doubt

བློ་ཚོར་པ།

The next root delusion is called afflicted doubt. It is doubt concerning the four noble truths, or the three supreme objects of refuge, and so forth. Adding the term “afflicted” excludes other types of doubt such as doubt about which road is the right one, or doubt about finding our way. These are doubts but they are not afflicted doubts.

Faith as the Antidote to Afflicted Doubt

In order to overcome this afflicted doubt we must maintain our faith and conviction in the benefits of dharma and the law of karma.

It is said that faith usually involves some understanding of why we practise dharma. This understanding is not just on an intellectual level, but it is from the depths of our hearts. Such faith in dharma is said to be the root cause for all virtue to arise. On the other hand if we lack such a faith, then we shall not sincerely practise dharma. Then all the things we do relating to meditation and study are just pretence.

Asking ourselves whether there is any benefit in the dharma we are practising, or whether we actually believe what we are studying, shows that doubt may possibly arise. So there is a long way to go to fully overcome that doubt, to believe in the law of karma and the qualities of the triple gem, and to actually see benefits of dharma.

Without generating this true faith in dharma you will not sincerely, and wholeheartedly engage in dharma practice, and as a result will not gain any true spiritual experiences or realisations. Then because you do not gain those benefits and spiritual realisations after all the effort and sacrifices you have made, you may become frustrated and disappointed with your spiritual practice and develop doubt.

¹ The wrong view of the transitory collections is one of the five wrong views. These five are all included in the sixth delusion of wrong view and will be covered in subsequent classes.

So to achieve benefits in dharma practice in the long run it is best to practise according to your own level and capacity. In other words do not push yourself to do a particular retreat, or to complete a particular practice, because it is most important to practise a little bit of dharma, enjoy yourself, and feel positive about it.

If you practise in a very easy consistent way, according to your own ability, and with faith, then even if you are not practising as much as others seem to, you will see progress and benefits over a period of time.

We have to be very realistic: we have only been practising dharma for a very short time compared to the length of time with which we have been familiarising ourselves with mental delusions (which goes back to beginningless time). There is a risk that when we first meet dharma, we shall become excited and take many commitments without considering whether we can keep them for the rest of our life. We may seriously engage in dharma practice for a day, a month, or a year, but not seeing any progress we become frustrated, and then generate this afflicted doubt. Then because of this afflicted doubt, we generate wrong views about the law of karma and the benefit of dharma. Then, when we look back at our life, and see that all our study of dharma, and all our practice turns out to be like a venomous poison.

There are many students here who do not take commitments and do retreats. Their approach is very simple and they apply the teachings to their own day-to-day lifestyle and always try to keep faith in dharma. In the long run there are more benefits this way.

Therefore what we are discussing here is how to best fit dharma into our daily life. Our core practise is to maintain our faith. But in terms of other practises e.g. taking commitments, then we should always check our abilities. Geshe-la is saying this in a friendly manner, not to indicate that you are incapable of practising dharma, rather that whatever dharma you do should be done sincerely and with faith. This is what he does himself. Whenever he teaches to others he never says something which is not from his heart, or just to please them. Geshela is not the kind of person who flatters others nor does he like anyone to flatter him. However it does give him great delight when he sees friends who practise dharma wholeheartedly.

In fact how much we practise dharma depends upon our faith in it. Faith in the law of cause and effect, for example knowing that killing or stealing results in suffering in the future, will make us more aware of the need to refrain from such non-virtuous acts. If in our daily actions we are performing more virtuous actions, or even if we feel regret about having done any non-virtuous actions, this shows that we have more faith in the law of karma. Whereas doing more non-virtuous acts in our daily life, and having no regret about them, shows the weakness of our faith in the law of karma.

So we can see the role of faith in making progress in dharma. When there is faith in the law of karma, we shall naturally feel deep regret for all the wrong actions we have done so far. So why do we feel this regret? We feel it because the law of karma is unfailing and incontrovertible, in that if we create wrong actions we shall suffer in the

future. This is certain. Thus we avoid negative actions and regret those already done. It is faith which motivates us to purify those negative actions by, for example, the practice of confession.

It is also faith that ensures that the dedication of merit will be multiplied, and serve as a cause to achieve liberation or enlightenment. If one truly believes and has faith in it, then one will follow that practice.

Lacking faith in the law of karma is an obstruction to gaining higher status or higher rebirth - the main cause of which is abandoning non-virtuous acts and creating virtuous ones. Likewise lacking faith in the four noble truths is an obstruction to liberation. Lacking faith in the truth of path to cessation is an obstruction to achieving cessation, because you will not seek that truth of the path. So we have to apply the dharma to our minds and actions rather than viewing it as something unrelated to one's negative states of mind. So it is within the context of our own mind and actions that we must see the benefits of dharma and the truth of the law of karma.

A Brief Method of Practising Faith

We leave the teaching here. First we shall recite the refuge prayer three times then seven rounds of Buddha Shakyamuni's mantra. Make sure that you have a convenient posture that is relaxing for yourself, and as you recite the refuge prayer visualise in the space before you all your gurus and buddhas. Take refuge in them, and generate the altruistic mind of enlightenment or bodhicitta. Having done this try to feel deep regret for all the types of negative actions accumulated in your lives since beginningless time. This accumulation of negativities is like deadly poison going into your body. So feel this regret then make a strong resolution, "From henceforth to the best of my ability I shall not repeat these same actions." Confess these negativities and make a resolution not to repeat such actions in front of all the buddhas and gurus. Then we chant Buddha's mantra and as we chant imagine, in the form of a stream of light and nectar from all the gurus and buddhas, descending to fill our bodies and purify all our negativities, thus transforming our body completely so it becomes pure and crystal clear. If you like you can visualise the blessings going to all other sentient beings and purifying them just like you. Finish the recitation then dissolve the gurus and buddhas into yourself.

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

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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