

Study Group - "Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand"
A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga
Translated by Samdup Tsering



ལྷན་སྒྲུབ་ཀྱི་ལྔ་ལྔ་ལྔ་བཅུ་དམ་པ་

23 August 1994

For your motivation try to cultivate bodhicitta, which is the genuine wish to achieve Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings.

422.122.32 The Four Powers Of Purification¹

ལྔ་ལྔ་ལྔ་སྒྲུབ་ཀྱི་ལྔ་ལྔ་ལྔ་བཅུ་དམ་པ་

In preceding teachings we listed and described the ten virtuous actions, the ten non-virtuous actions, and their corresponding results. We also learnt how to put these teachings on karma into practice. The next topic is how to purify negativities by applying the four forces of purification.

This topic is also essential because even if we engage in practising virtuous actions we may still commit negative acts. Instead of ignoring such negative actions, something should be done to purify them. This is done by applying the four forces of purification.

In one sutra it says:

Oh Bodhisattva Mahasattvas, if these four dharmas or qualities are present, then the negativities which are created and accumulated can be fully suppressed.

These four dharmas, or forces of purification² are:

- the force of regret

རྣམ་པར་སྲུང་འབྲིན་པའི་སྒྲུབ་པ།

- the force of remedy

གཉེན་པོ་ཀྱང་དུ་སྐྱོང་པའི་སྒྲུབ་པ།

- the force of base or object

ཉེས་པ་ལས་སྦྱར་ལྡོག་པའི་སྒྲུབ་པ།

- the force of resolution.

དེའི་གྱི་སྒྲུབ་པ།

1. The Force Of Regret

རྣམ་པར་སྲུང་འབྲིན་པའི་སྒྲུབ་པ།

The force of regret means to feel, as strongly as possible, regret regret for any negativities that one has created since beginningless time.

Understanding The Results Of Negative Actions

In order to feel regret about negative actions, you need to have an understanding of the results of those actions. The three types of results of any negative action have been previously discussed³ They are very undesirable and frightening. The unfailing truth of the law of karma is that positive actions produce happiness and negative actions produce suffering. With a firm conviction in this unfailing truth, one knows that unless a given negative action is purified by the four forces of purification, some form of suffering is inevitable. Similarly the result of a virtuous action is definitely happiness, unless the positive karma is harmed or destroyed by anger. If one meditates on the results of the different forms of negative actions which one has created, not only will there be regret for those negative actions, but also one will be more mindful and cautious of the need to avoid repeating the same action again. Therefore feeling regret helps to avoid the repetition of negative actions in the future. Also, simply feeling regret for negative actions purifies half of their results.

Methods Of Generating Regret

It is said that we should view negative actions as a kind of poison. Another analogy is viewing them in the same way as you would view a venomous snake in front of you.

Imagine that you are one of three people who have been poisoned. The first is already dead and the second is currently undergoing excruciating pain and near to death. You know that sooner or later you will face the same experience. It is easy to see why you would want to do something to remove that poison before it is too late.

In reality we see people undergoing continuous pain and suffering, and the main cause is their negative actions. One may not fully recall having created the cause to experience such suffering and pain. It might have created in this present life and definitely in past lifetimes. Compared to the many other lives which we have assumed in past, this present life is supposed to be a very fortunate one, enjoying better conditions and more freedom. Yet we have still created much negativity in order to fulfil our desires and wishes.

¹Liberation page 467 The title used in the text is "In particular, how to purify oneself with the four powers."

² There is also a more detailed discussion in Liberation pages 219-220

³ Study Group 26 October 1993

If we are able to create negative actions while we enjoy this best form of life and conditions, there is no question that we created negative actions in the past when we did not enjoy such a fortunate form of life. When we create negative actions therefore, we can apply the remedy of regret as a means of purifying the negative actions.

2. The Force Of Remedy

གཉིན་པོ་ཀུན་ཏུ་སྤྱོད་པའི་སྒྲུབ་སྒྲུབ།

Generally speaking any virtuous action we do counteracts the non-virtuous ones we commit. However the remedy here is very specifically talking about the practice which is specifically done to purify negativities.

In Shantideva's text *The Condensed Precepts* six types of remedies are mentioned⁴

1. Reciting profound scriptures
 2. Meditating on emptiness
 3. Chanting mantras
 4. Constructing statues
 5. Making offerings
 6. Saying the names of buddhas and bodhisattvas.
1. An example of reciting profound scriptures is reciting the *Heart Sutra*, in order to memorise the words of that scripture. This also means to remember the meaning of the words of the Heart Sutra.
 2. An example of meditating on emptiness is meditating on the emptiness which is non-inherent existence. This can be practised within the context of the non-inherent existence of the person, who is the subject or the creator of the action; and the non-inherent existence of the action; and the non-inherent existence of the object, upon whom or which the action is performed.
 3. Chanting or reciting mantras such as the one hundred syllable mantra of Vajrasattva, and the mantras of various deities.
 4. Constructing or building statues also includes the restoration of old statues. In terms of purifying negativities the practice becomes more powerful, if one builds or renovates statues while specifically thinking of purifying ones negativities, and with firm faith in the holy objects.
 5. Making offerings of any worthwhile thing to the holy body, speech and mind.

All Holy Images To Be Treated As The Actual Holy Body Speech And Mind

If you have an altar at home you should make offerings to whatever statue or image of the Buddha you have, imagining those images are real Buddhas or real Taras. Therefore any offerings, prostrations or other practice made to those objects, will receive true blessings from all the Buddhas and Taras. So it is not necessary to visit a distant temple or make offerings to holy objects. Any holy objects you have at home should be the real Buddhas and Taras for you. It all depends upon faith. With faith you receive blessings from all Buddhas. Without faith you cannot receive blessings from the Buddhas.

The very purpose of blessing holy images in a ritual is to also transform that image to represent the true Buddha or whatever that image represents. In the process of the blessing, the image is filled with various mantras in different parts of it. Each different part represents different qualities of that image. When it is fully blessed all those qualities are fully invoked.

These images should always be regarded as real Buddhas for one's practice and offerings. For example, if done with faith, even offering a small flower represents an offering to all the real Buddhas.

6. Saying the names of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. For this saying the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas of Confession is said to be the most effective, and it is also recommended to say the names of the Eight Medicine Buddhas. As a means to purify negativities we can recite the text of the Thirty-five Buddhas of Confession, and if feasible, at the same time perform prostrations as a post-meditation (or in-between session) practice. Lama Tsong Khapa used the same Thirty-five Buddhas of Confession practice and prostrations for his retreat. Following this same practice enables us to receive blessings from the gurus and buddhas very quickly.

A Brief Description Of The Thirty Five Buddhas Practice⁵

The Lord Buddha is visualised seated on a lion throne. From his heart thirty-five rays of light shine forth. On each tip are the Thirty-five Buddhas of confession. One then thinks that all the other sentient beings surround one, and join in the prayers and prostrations. If one wishes to elaborate a bit, the rays of light from Buddha's heart radiate to every atom or particle which exists. On the tip of each ray of light is the assembly of the Thirty-five Buddhas, and oneself surrounded by all sentient beings. Therefore there are millions of sentient beings joining in saying the prayers and performing the prostrations.

At the beginning of the practice of the Thirty-five Buddhas of confession you must remember to feel fear of the results of your negativities, have genuine faith in the qualities of the buddhas, and have love and compassion for all other beings. In generating the motivation for engaging in the Thirty-five Buddhas practice you should first cultivate Bodhicitta, the wish to attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. Then think "In order to fulfil this ultimate wish for enlightenment I take refuge in the three jewels and I make prostrations to the Thirty-five Buddhas in order to purify my negativities". Then begin the prayers and prostrations.

At the end of the practice a mandala is offered. Then you can dissolve the Thirty-five Buddhas in either of two ways:

1. dissolve the thirty-five buddhas into yourself. The way of dissolving the buddhas into oneself is to either:
 - 1.1. dissolve the surrounding buddhas into the Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, who in turn dissolves into you as a way of receiving the blessings, or;
 - 1.2. dissolve all thirty-five buddhas simultaneously into yourself.
2. rather than dissolve the buddhas into oneself they can be dissolved into emptiness.

⁵ See *Liberation...* page 221 and pp775-8. Other useful references about the Thirty-five Buddhas of confession are "The nine preliminaries (commentaries and practice texts)" by Kangyurwa Khenzur Lozang Thubten Rinpoche and translated by Dawa Dhondrup pages 196 to 203. Also Geshe Doga gave a commentary to the Thirty-five Buddhas of confession over four nights in January to February 1992.

⁴"Liberation..." p220

The Thirty-five Buddhas practice constitutes all four opponent forces of purification. Whatever purification practice we do should include the four forces.

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30 August 1994

Cultivate the motivation of bodhicitta - one which wishes for the attainment of the complete state of Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings.

Right from the beginning of the practice we have to focus on our own state of mind. Because the whole aim of spiritual practice is to remove all negativities and to develop more positive and wholesome states of mind. Right at the beginning we are reminded to check our motivation, because by engaging in spiritual practice we are not trying to become rich, famous or a great scholar.

Not only do we make sure that our motivation is the correct one, but we must always be mindful of our thoughts and deeds throughout the duration of practice. In this way we learn that if we make effort we can be rid of negative habits of mind and deeds, and feel comfortable about transforming our mind and deeds into positive states.

The Four Forces Of Purification (cont.)

We are currently discussing the four purifying forces which are the remedies to negative actions and karmas. If after engaging in adopting virtuous actions and discarding non-virtuous actions, we happen to create negative actions we should apply the four purifying forces to purify that negativity.

Of these four purifying forces the first two - the force of regret and the force of remedy - were finished last week.

3. The Force Of Resolution Or Resolve

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The third purifying force is the force of resolution. Having purified or removed negativities from their root cause, one can resolve not to create any negative actions on a day-to-day basis. Such resolutions are promises made with specification to a length of time.

A part of the force of resolution is to affirm with full determination the intention to not commit any actions of killing other beings even at the cost of one's life for as long as one lives. This resolution must come from the heart with confidence and determination.

Is Breaking A Resolution A Lie?

His Holiness the Dalai Lama said:

It will not become a lie if one happens to

commit that non-virtuous action later.

The reason why it is not lying is that at the time of making the promise (of not killing any other being at the cost of one's life, for as long as one lives), there was no intention to cheat or deceive other beings. It was a whole hearted resolution, so if one ends up killing another being, the resolution or commitment one made does not become a lie. However there is a point for further discussion on this issue.

4. The Force Of Base

རྩིས་ཀྱི་སྣོན་པ་

The fourth purifying force is the force of base. This principally involves;

- taking refuge in the three jewels and,
- generating bodhicitta.

The Meaning Of Purification Of Negativities

By applying these four purifying forces any negativity can be purified, which means preventing of the main result of that negative karma from arising. There are three different ways in which the result of the negativities are purified or prevented:

- a. The negativities are permanently or completely purified in the sense that the result will never arise.
- b. The result of the negativities arises, but in a lesser form. For example the result of the negativities which one is supposed to experience in the next life as a great form of misery or suffering, arises in this life as a light headache, or some form of very light suffering or pain.
- c. Similarly the result of negativities arises but for a shorter period of time. The purification of negativities has the effect of not completely purifying the negativities but shortens the time for which one experiences their result.

Signs Of Success In Purification

It is said that there are some signs which will let us know if the purification of negativities has taken place. The main time where one can expect signs of purification is during dreams. The signs won't necessarily be in dreams, but any one of them occurring in dreams can be a sign of purification. For example dreaming of vomiting filthy

food, tasting milk or yoghurt, riding on an elephant or the sun or moon, the sun or moon dissolving into oneself or oneself dissolving into the sun or moon, or swallowing them, or seeing holy beings such as Bhikshus and Bhikshunis, one's spiritual teacher or images of holy beings, e.g. statues of Buddha. These are signs of purification for beginner or ordinary practitioners.

For the advanced practitioner there is the sign of advancing from lower path to higher path e.g. from the path of seeing to the path of meditation. That is, the advancement of the stages of their spiritual realisations is a sign of purification.

Three Factors Necessary For An Effective Purification Practice

1. When engaging in any form of purification practice, ensure that the motivation with which the practice is begun is bodhicitta.
2. During the time of the actual engagement in the practice maintain awareness of the emptiness of the three circles - that the subject who performs the action, the action itself and the object upon which the action is performed are all lacking inherent existence.
3. At the end always dedicate to attaining complete enlightenment.

If one's purification practice is qualified with all these three - the motivation of Bodhicitta at the beginning, remembering emptiness of the three circles in the middle and the dedication to full enlightenment at the end, it will be the most effective practice of purification.

This completes the teaching on the stages of the path shared by the small spiritual practitioner.

Summary Of Stages Of The Path Of The Small Scope

There are four main subjects of contemplation in the stages of the path of small being or small practitioner:

1. Death and impermanence.
2. Suffering of the three lower realms.
3. Taking refuge.
4. Making effort in the practice of the law of karma in terms of adopting the ten virtuous actions and avoiding the ten non-virtuous actions.

It is said that if as a result of following this practice, one's mind aspires to the goals of a future life, rather than the goals of this life, then one has begun the practice of the stages of the path shared by the practitioner of the small scope. Without the meditations on these four main subjects of the small scope our mind is always thinking of, or concerned with, affairs of this life and it does not seek the goal of future life at all. Or if it does, the goals of this life are the primary concern.

The purpose of following the stages of small scope path is to redirect our mental concerns for this life to the concerns of future lives.

The Four Things Which Make Us Go Beyond Dharma

Having transformed or broadened one's mental scope to seeking the goal of future life, then one follows the stages of the path shared by the medium practitioner or medium person as one's main practice. Regarding spiritual practice in general, Nagarjuna said:

There are four things which make one go beyond Dharma. They are:

1. Desire: For example killing a sheep because of a desire or craving for meat
2. Hatred
3. Ignorance: For example holding a view that animal sacrifice is the very best or ultimate offering to a god and so killing an animal. Ignorance has been the cause of that negativity.
4. Fear: For example engaging in any form of negative action on the order of some other person because you fear that person.

These four are to be remembered and to be purified and eliminated in order to prevent negativities.

Here we finish stages of the path shared by the path of small scope. Next is stages of the path shared by the path of medium scope.

Factors Determining The Degree Of Purification

Student 1: Did you say that by applying the four opponent powers the negative karma could be completely, permanently extinguished? I thought a perception of emptiness is necessary to do this?

Geshe-la: There we were referring to the specific karma of killing say, an animal. This can be purified by the four opponent powers which means that the main result of that karma will not be experienced. In the sense of that first type of purification it means that you will not experience the results of that karma. Purification does not mean that you will not create the act of killing again, and then have to suffer from that.

Student 1: If I purify all my negativities of body, speech and mind, all broken samayas, etc with the four opponent powers then I should no longer suffer.

Geshe-la: This is concerning purifying negative karmas accumulated up to now, but this does not mean that you will be purifying karmas you accumulate tomorrow.

If you purify you will not suffer and if you suffer this shows that you have not purified.

It is important to purify negativity before it starts producing its result. Once it starts producing its result e.g. a result lasting ten years, it is extremely difficult to purify. The fruition of karma is the actualisation of the impetus of that karma. Since the impetus of that karma has already started producing a result, it will be difficult to purify that karma.

It is like a seed which has the potential within to produce a sprout. The moment that seed starts to grow, that potential has been used, so we cannot bring it back. Therefore the negativities must be purified before starting their result.

Student 1: Of these three types of level of purification, what determines the level of purification occurring?

Geshe-la: The degree or level of negativities would decide that. If the negativity was very powerful, then if even a part of it is not purified, it will produce its result. If the negativity is very powerful the purifying forces must be more powerful. Even if you apply all four forces you will still experience a result in some form.

The remedy applied to the negativity to be purified should be more powerful than the negativity itself. For example in war to fully defeat an enemy your army must be more powerful than the army of the enemy. If the forces are equal in strength, then although you can damage the enemy and bring a lot of harm with weapons and machine guns, you cannot defeat the enemy. To achieve victory your force has to be stronger than the enemy. This also applies to the purifying forces necessary to bring about the purification of negativities.

In a lot of cases we purify negativities through our practice, but at the same time continuously create new negativities. So we cannot completely prevent the unwanted results, but because we completely apply the four opponent forces our negativities do not multiply.

We must realise that the negativities accumulated in past lives are enormous compared to the negativities created in this life. Therefore purifying negativities is like someone trying to pay off a past loan of one hundred thousand dollars by now borrowing one thousand dollars. Because the person has paid off all their past loan what they owe now is very small. Therefore there is no reason to feel bad about negativities created in this life as long as you engage in practices to purify past negativities.

This does not mean that creating minor negativities is acceptable. As was mentioned in the previous teachings, it is better to have never broken one's leg than to break it and then have it mended, since it will never be the same as it was before being broken. It is best to avoid negativities. Even though we may purify the negativities they will still have some effect, such as delayed spiritual attainments and so forth.

Obviously someone who has never had trouble with their legs can run faster and longer without any trouble. Whereas someone who has problems with their legs, and then had them fixed, will be much slower and cannot run as far or as fast. This is an example of how to practice dharma.

Geshe-la will now return the exam papers. He would like to thank you for your effort in the written test. It looks as though everybody has performed well except that the number of people completing the test has

dropped.

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6 September 1994

Try to create the right frame of mind, in order to generate the thought that to benefit all sentient beings I shall attain the complete state of enlightenment, and it is for this reason that I listen to and practise the profound Dharma.

Results Arising From Our Practice Of The Small Scope

Having finished the stages of the path shared by persons of the small scope we now begin stages of the path shared by persons of the middle scope. As a whole, the entire stages of the path is designed to lead one to the ultimate state of complete enlightenment or buddhahood. This progress on the path is a gradual process. In the stages of the path shared by persons of small scope, we learnt how to overcome a strong grasping at this life and broaden the scope of the mind to consider the goal of future lives.

By following the stages of the path of the small scope, one overcomes grasping at this life and this has the immediate benefit of helping to overcome the main source of mental unhappiness and confusion even within this lifetime. Therefore this practice of stages of the path is very beneficial. The stages of the small path is like medicine or an instrument which can pacify this grasping at this life.

It is said that an indication of one's progress in the stages of small scope is that there is some feeling or confidence that one will not have a lower rebirth in future lives. It is most important that we integrate our learning into our daily life and not just study about these stages of the path.

The Benefits Of Spiritual Teachings - To Bring Peace To The Mind

In following the Dharma or spiritual teachings, we must know in what way it is of benefit, compared to other kinds of benefits that we seek.

Essentially the Dharma or spiritual teaching is all about our way of thinking, so we must always relate the spiritual teachings to our mind. Therefore the spiritual teachings on the stages of the path must be related to one's own mind.

A person of small scope gives the message that they are seriously pursuing any means which can overcome

grasping at this life. Such a person sees grasping at this life as very negative, and a source of unhappiness both in this life and the life beyond. Everything he or she learns from the path is to be utilised as a remedy to grasping at this life.

So even as a follower of stages of the path of the small scope, the focus is on overcoming faults or negativities in one's mind. The focus is not on outer appearance. If the outer appearance is of a celibate monk or nun but inwardly there is a strong grasping at this life and sensual objects, such a person is no different from other ordinary beings. Whereas an outwardly ordinary person may inwardly be always very thoughtful, inward looking, aware of their mental continuum, remaining calm and peaceful and always maintaining their spiritual practice. Irrespective of their outer appearance such a person is a superior practitioner, and is enriched with great inner peace and happiness.

Whatever part of the teaching you follow the essential purpose is to utilise it, so as to develop positive qualities in the mind and to bring more peace and happiness into the mind. So whenever we confront some emotional or internal difficulties we must remember what the teachings say. What they say is that there is no point in feeling very discouraged, depressed, frustrated and unhappy, to the point internally that even a slight outer noise can generate anger. Under such circumstances one must be very careful. It is best to utilise the technique, or teaching, of dharma to see that the cause of the problem is within the mind, then utilise the knowledge of dharma to deal with that.

In this way you can overcome, and make use of the dharma to bring so much peace and happiness to the mind. Inner happiness in the mind is what we need, not external possessions such as food, drink, clothing and so on which we already have.

Having a very strong sense of ego, (which is a deep down thought of I) does not help if the mind is not happy, peaceful and stable. In this way it is said, if we integrate dharma into our daily practice, then like snow bathed in sunshine, all our inner problems and difficulties will disappear. Dharma is very effective in getting rid of internal problems.

The Causes Of Harmony In Relationships

We find that knowledge of the dharma, for instance about the law of karma, the practice of patience or tolerance are all able to prevent unnecessary misery in daily life situations. We should also regard this teaching of dharma as a means of finding happiness and satisfaction in life, in the same way that we put a great deal of effort into accumulating wealth, or pursuing other activities which bring some happiness or satisfaction. The fact that material wealth and other external things have failed to provide the satisfaction we expected or hoped, turns our mind towards dharma.

We have been learning about the meaning of dharma but we must remember to get the benefit out of that dharma. We first turned our mind to dharma because the external means of finding happiness or resolving our problems was ineffective.

However if we do not think of Dharma in real life situations, we do not try to see daily problems through the perspective of Dharma, our knowledge of Dharma is of little use in this life. A clear indication of how we are not practising the Dharma is how easily we lose control and become angry even with our close friends. Our mind is very narrow in thinking working only on face value. If what is in front of us is attractive, even if it is minor or small in value, and someone interferes with it, or tries to take it, we become angry. If we do not obtain such small things we become very frustrated and unhappy. We are not even prepared to sacrifice minor possessions to achieve happiness. So you can see how our mind is very narrow in scope because even though we have so many good things, we become unhappy if missing one small thing.

Our vision must be far sighted and our mind must be broad. Then, in real situations, we can see that the reason for unhappiness up to now is because of narrow-minded thinking. As a result of that, it becomes apparent that all the immediate causes of the problems are created by this narrow way of thinking. When a friend causes a slight problem, the mind becomes very focused on that problem, and in this way conjures up this whole situation into a major problem so bringing disharmony into the relationship.

Some of the major problems we face in life initially happened due to a very minor or small cause which grew to become very serious - not because of the actual situation itself but rather because of the mind. So a disharmonious environment with surrounding people is created with the result that one suffers.

From the spiritual point of view the realistic way of seeing the situation is to firstly recognise that one needs a friend. Without a friend life is not easy, but living with a friend in disharmony is also a very unhappy situation.

Therefore we must think about what can be done do to bring about harmony and sustain that harmony in one's

relationships with others. One of the factors necessary to bring harmony in relationships is patience. One cannot always be the winner. Without patience it only takes a minor conflict to bring disharmony in relationships; minor things said by a friend can upset the mind a great deal.

Therefore realising that friendship and harmony are important; realising that one wants to be a good person with tolerance and so forth, the way to fulfil all those wishes is the teaching of Dharma (such as the law of cause and effect). These teachings are very relevant in daily life situations.

The Benefits Of Tolerance

Through the spiritual training we are trying to master ourselves, to protect our happiness in life and specifically our mental happiness. For this we must study and also put that study into practice. In order to protect our mental peace and happiness we must show patience and tolerance towards those unfavourable situations which we confront in life. For example when somebody says something nasty, we should immediately remember 'I must tolerate that'. The reason for showing tolerance is that otherwise you will lose your temper. Even if you were happy and peaceful before, then losing your temper means that you will not have that peace now.

Rather than losing your temper, if you relax yourself and calm down your mind, then whatever the situation, the mind will not be affected. This is the benefit of patience in protecting or safeguarding one's inner peace or happiness. You may not be fully successful in protecting your peace, but if you try hard, then next time you may be able to show tolerance. If you consistently try hard to show patience in such unfavourable situations, then after one or two more uncomfortable situations you will become more and more adept at tolerance and become a master over the practice of patience.

So we have used all our time on general topics rather than the specifics.

Now recite the Twenty One Taras prayer thinking:

May all sentient beings be free of all their unwanted things and may they fulfil all their desirable things.

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ལྷན་ལམ་རིམ་རྣམས་གྲོལ་ལག་བཅུངས།

13 September 1994

To generate the right motivation think: 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I shall attain the full state of enlightenment or Buddhahood, and it is for this reason that I study the stages of the path and put it into practice.'

422.2: The Stages Of The Path Shared By The Person Of Middle Scope

སྐྱེས་བུ་འབྲིང་དང་ཐུན་མོང་བའི་ལམ་གྱི་རིམ་
'པར་སློབ་སྦྱང་བ།

We now begin teaching on the stages of the path shared by persons of middle scope. A spiritual person of middle scope is defined in Atisha's 'Lamp of the Path' as one who has turned his back on the pleasures of cyclic existence, abandoned evil or unwholesome actions, and who seeks personal peace and happiness.²

The Three Characteristics Of The Person Of Middle Scope

This verse indicates the three characteristics of a person of the middle scope with respect to their:

1. motivation
2. deeds
3. aim or the result being sought.

1. By contemplating the suffering that pervades cyclic existence, ranging from the peak of cyclic existence to the hell realm called 'boundless suffering', a person of the

¹Liberation.. p473 The title used in the text is "Training your mind in the stages of the path shared with the Medium Scope."

²Richard Sherbourne's translation of verses three to five from the *Lamp Of The Path* is:

(Small scope)

One who by every means he finds,
seeks but the pleasure of samsara,
and cares but for himself alone, that one
is known as the inferior person.

(Medium scope)

One who puts life's pleasures behind
and turns himself from deeds of sin,
yet cares only about his own peace,
that person should be called a mediocre.

(Great scope)

One who truly seeks a complete end
to the entire suffering of others because
their suffering belongs to his own (conscious) stream,
that person is a superior.

middle scope realises that no true happiness exists in cyclic existence. Whether it be a rebirth as the Chakravartin being, or as the Universal king such as Indra or Brahma, or even in the form of a dream, cyclic existence offers no true happiness to the person of middle scope. So in terms of motivation we see that the middle scope person is totally detached from the pleasures of cyclic existence.

2. With this understanding, the middle scope person makes every effort to avoid the negative non-virtuous actions from the three doors of body speech and mind.

3. In terms of the aim or fruit, the special characteristic of the person of middle scope is that for their own sake they seek ultimate peace and happiness from the cessation of suffering.

Anyone who possesses all these characteristics or qualifications in terms of motivation, deeds and aim becomes a true follower of the lesser vehicle or Hinayana.

Difference Between Hinayana And Mahayana

In the literal sense, that is in terms of an etymological meaning, a person is called a person of middle scope because they are superior to a person of small scope. They are lower than a person of great scope because they do not have the superior intention which takes on the burden of the welfare of all other beings.

A person of great scope following the great vehicle of Mahayana also follows the stages of the path of the small and middle scope, but does not follow the *actual* path of the small or middle scope, rather such a person of the Mahayana follows a path which is *shared* with persons of small or middle scope.

Put another way the followers of the lesser vehicle or Hinayana, follow the *actual* stages of the small or middle scope path whereas the persons of the great vehicle of Mahayana *share* these same paths with them while differing in their goals. So there is a difference between the *actual* path followed by those of the small scope or the middle scope of the Hinayana vehicle and the path *shared* with followers of the Mahayana vehicle.

In Atisha's *Lamp of the Path* the definitions given are the definitions of the *actual* paths of the small, middle and great scopes. Whereas in the Lam Rim teachings the stages of the path presented is not the actual one, but is the one *shared* with the person of small and middle scope as well. Technically we say those entered into the path of small scope have entered into the *actual* path of Hinayana and

those actually entering into the path of middle scope are also entering into the *actual* lesser vehicle path. The Mahayana practitioner does not enter into the actual path of the small or middle scope since those are paths of the lesser vehicle.

We distinguish between the Hinayana and Mahayana vehicles in terms of motivation, deeds, the fruit or goal that is sought and for which purpose that goal is sought. The difference between Hinayana and Mahayana is known in terms of these four.

In the case of the actual path of middle scope, the path is of the Hinayana or lesser vehicle because:

- the motivation or intention of the follower of that path is limited to renunciation of cyclic existence
- the deeds are not the same as the deeds of the Mahayana path
- the goal or fruit sought by the middle scope person is self liberation
- that goal is sought for their own benefit

For all these reasons it is an inferior path compared to the Mahayana path.

Next week you should discuss (as your compulsory discussion) the quotation from Atisha's 'Lamp to the Path', regarding the definition of a person of the middle scope.

Last time Geshe-la said that the number of people sitting the exam has dropped. This was not meant as a complaint to those not doing the written test. What is most important is that you participate in teachings, discussions and the test night. The most important thing is that you put in an effort to develop your knowledge and practice. Even those who do not wish to do the written test should come on that night to do their own meditation.

The Actual Antidote To Attachment For Cyclic Existence

Student: Of the meditations in middle scope which is the actual antidote to attachment to samsara or cyclic existence?

Geshe-la: This topic will come later. The two major subjects are the four noble truths and the twelve links of interdependent origination.

There are plenty of meditational subjects to overcome attachment to cyclic existence. To make a list, in some texts you can subdivide within the lesser vehicle into different levels, for example:

- middle-small scope person
- middle-middle scope person
- middle-great scope person

The main qualification of a middle scope person is the genuine wish for liberation for one's own benefit. If, out of this wish one were to follow the practices of avoiding the ten non-virtuous actions, this is the middle-small scope person.

If out of the same motivation of renunciation you follow the practice of meditating on the four noble truths each of

which breaks into different aspects³, e.g. suffering impermanence, impurity etc., these all overcome attachment to cyclic existence. This is a middle-middle scope person.

If from this same motivation of renunciation you engage in meditation on the twelve links in terms of the engaging and reversing order of the twelve links, this is a middle-great scope person.

If you engage the entire path in this way, it is the three fold training⁴.

To be specific the meditation to overcome attachment to samsara falls within contemplation of the Truth of Suffering which includes:

- Impermanence
- Misery
- Emptiness
- Selflessness

This meditation falls specifically under the category of meditation on the aspects of impermanence and misery as a characteristic of Truth of Suffering.

Attachment is generated by seeing its object e.g. the body, as being clean and as an object of pleasure or enjoyment. If we contemplate the object as being unclean etc., this also remedies attachment.

Specific Meditations To Overcome Attachment

The more specific meditation would be the one as explained in the Lam Rim teachings in which you mentally imagine the object of attachment, e.g. the body of another person or one's own body. Then imagine that the right hand half of the body is flowing with blood and pus, and the other left half of the body is filled with maggots and other things. In front there is just naked flesh which is rotten and smelly. As one creates such imaginations very strongly in our mind it counters attachment to that body.

Another method is in the Abhidharma text, which suggests that we think of a bone in the centre of our forehead. It is very white in colour and is in shape of half the size of a one cent piece. Focus the mind on it. Then enlarge that bone to encompass the upper half of your body, then all your body, then the nearby ground, then the entire ground. When you have done that then you can dissolve or contract that visualisation. Do this by first contracting the visualisation of the entire ground, which is in the form of bone, to the soles of your feet, then focus on that for a while. Then enlarge it as before, then contract it to the heart in the upper half of your body. Then from the heart of your body contract it to the small size of bone in the centre of your forehead, then maintain your concentration on that in meditational equipoise. At that stage there is not much desire or hatred.

³Liberation.. p476 There are four aspects to each of the four noble truths making sixteen in total:

Truth of suffering: impermanence, suffering, emptiness, selflessness

Truth of source of suffering: cause, source, contributory cause, intense production

Truth of cessation: cessation, peace, splendour, definite outcome

Truth of path: path, correctness, accomplishing, definite deliverance

⁴Higher morality, Higher concentration, Higher wisdom