

# Study Group - “Liberation *in the Palm of Your Hand*”

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅུངས།



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Try to establish the bodhicitta motivation, which is the genuine wish to attain buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings. It is in order to attain this wish for full enlightenment that we are studying and practising these teachings of the stages of the path.

## 422.221.13: The Causes of Delusions

ཉེན་མོངས་པའི་རྒྱ།

Having finished identifying delusions and the stages in which delusions are generated, we must now understand that these delusions are not without causes. In other words, delusions arise in the mind because of they meet with certain conditions.

As the delusions are dependent upon causes and conditions, then we can at least temporarily, if not permanently, avoid those delusions if we make an effort to avoid those causes and conditions.

The text lists six causes of delusions.

## 422.221.131: First Cause: Base (or Foundation)

ཉེན།

The first cause is literally ‘the base’. This is the cause which serves as the foundation for any delusion to arise upon meeting with its conditions.

The base of the delusion refers to what we can call the seed of the delusions. Using the term ‘seed’ shows that it has the potential or latency to produce the delusions.

It can also be called the unmanifested delusion or the subconscious delusion. From this perspective we are referring to a delusion which is not yet manifested. However it is seated within us, and can manifest from even a very minor cause.

Therefore the base cause of delusion is like the seed of a disease which if not removed could, at any moment, result in some illness or pain, due to even a small cause. Unless we attack the seed of delusions there is always a chance for delusion to manifest in our mind.

The first cause of delusion serves as the base to produce and increase delusion, which is why it is called the base.

An example of the difference between manifest and unmanifest delusions is when you generate and feel anger towards someone you dislike. When that person is in your mind your anger is very apparent and obvious. But in the next moment a close friend turns up, and the mind changes its thoughts to the friend. At that moment the previous anger disappears, but this does not mean that it has been removed, because it is still seated in the subconscious mind. It can still arise, or manifest, later without any great cause. Because of this cause of base the delusions arise in the mind when certain conditions occur.

## 422.221.132: Second Cause: Object of Delusion

དམིགས་པའམ་ཡུལ།

The object of the delusion is also a cause of delusions. The object of delusions can be either;

- pleasant
- unpleasant
- neutral object.

Each of these three objects can stimulate attachment, hatred and ignorance respectively. The reason why delusion is generated when our mind rests on the objects is not totally because of these objects, but is mainly because of the base (i.e. the first cause, which is the seed or latency of delusions which exists inside us). Because the seeds or latencies of delusions have not been abandoned, the various objects in which the mind engages can stimulate delusions.

The fact that an outer object can be a cause for delusion to arise in our mind, is because we have not abandoned the seed of delusions. However we can still prevent delusions by avoiding their object, since the object is a contributory cause of delusions. It is the same as a seed being unable to ripen without the contributory causes of soil and water.

It is very worthwhile to avoid the objects of delusion, because for beginners it is not easy to abandon the seed of delusions. So avoiding or distancing ourselves from the object of delusions is a very effective method of lessening the force of delusion.

## Vasubhandu’s Three Causes of Delusions

Vasubhandu said, “the conditions of delusions are three:

- not abandoning the seed
- becoming close to the object of delusion
- generating the misconception.”

Although the Lam Rim mentions six causes of delusions Vasubhandu in *Treasury of Knowledge*, or *Abidharma*, said that there are only three. However all six causes of delusions are included in these three.

According to Vasubhandu the first cause of generating delusions is “not abandoning the seed”. Because we have not got rid of the seed of delusion, we generate delusions in the mind when we meet other conditions.

“Being close to object of delusions” refers to the three types of objects: pleasant, unpleasant, and indifferent objects. Pleasant objects stimulate attachment. Unpleasant objects stimulate hatred and anger, and neutral objects increase ignorance in the mind.

Therefore the most effective practice which the beginner can perform is to avoid those objects, which are very forceful in generating any delusions. Such objects might

be a person to whom you are very attached, about whom you feel very jealous or angry, or very proud or competitive.

Because the thought of that object is the immediate cause for generating delusion, then we shall be able to minimise that delusion if we could get rid of that object, by distancing ourselves from it. It is very effective and helpful for us to minimise the thought of that object, and it is something we can do in practice. In this way avoiding the object is an effective means of abandoning delusions.

Thirdly Vasubhandu says "Generating the misconceptions" is a cause of delusion. These misconceptions are a very important factor which feed all the delusions and allow them to grow. With the pleasant objects to which we have strong desire or attachment, the more we project our thought about why that object is so pleasant, useful, attractive and beautiful then the stronger this desire becomes. Then the attachment grows stronger. Whereas with an unpleasant object to which we have hostile feelings, we create a list of reasons about why we hate the object, and this increases the hatred.

We hear very often in the teachings that in order to change the mind we must observe it and its objects, and then try to direct the mind from one object to another. If we find that letting the mind go to the east brings troubles, then we try to direct the mind in a different direction. That practice is based on these teachings.

As part of our practice of eliminating or minimising delusions, we not only have to identify the type of delusion and its object we also have to be always very watchful of our thoughts. Through this watchfulness we then try to recognise what type of objects brings what type of delusion to our mind. When any delusion arises in our mind what does it do to us? What does it do to our life and daily experience? On the one hand, we must be very clear and sure of the fact that delusion, no matter what form it takes will ruin our life and bring harm; it will disturb our mental peace and happiness. On the other hand, we must know the causes of the delusions.

If we practise following the delusions in this way we shall have a genuine motivation to follow the practice since we know the reasons and benefits from that practice. Because we know the reasons and benefits we also know the methods to prevent delusions. One very effective method is to get rid of the object of delusion. Of course it is better to rid the object from your mind, and not to engage with that object mentally but if you cannot do that then close the sensory doors by not allowing the object to enter your sight for instance, or try to physically distance yourself from that object.

It is essential to see why we are doing this practice. The reason is not to cause problems for others, but only to calm one's own mind and challenge delusions. Delusions, no matter what form they take, are destructive to our life and to our experiences.

Ordinary beings see delusions as something positive. In worldly opinion, desire is something which is very positive. It is seen as necessary to achieve wealth, and as a source of pleasure. If you are attached to, say, a person, you will undergo great suffering and misery if that desire is not fulfilled. The only solution a worldly

person can perceive is to fulfil that desire. This is the opposite of what we say here, which is to be distant from that object. But for ordinary people being close to that person brings satisfaction, pleasure and fulfilment. Ordinary people justify even their attachment to friends and relatives, as being something without which they will have no happiness or pleasure in life. Such people also see having anger towards an enemy as important because the enemy must be defeated, and if they are not defeated you cannot be happy.

Therefore when we begin our spiritual practice, our view has to be very different from common views. On the spiritual path we look at the whole thing from a different perspective. We have to see that all the delusions from which we suffer endlessly in life are due to attachment, hatred, jealousy and so forth. Even attachment to a friend is a cause of bringing disturbance to our mind.

In Geshe Doga's own experience it is very clear that the more he distances himself from the town and the circle of friends and relatives, the more time there is for him to be by himself and to have peace and tranquillity within. For the last twenty two years he has been able to maintain the continuity of his daily practice with fewer interruptions, because he has been away from the inner circle of his relatives and friends. However he can feel that as he begins to hear news about his relatives from his nephew, who has arrived in Sera, it concerns him, which he knows also interferes with his practice.

From our own experience if we are to dedicate our life to our spiritual path to develop virtue in the mind and minimise all non-virtue, then it is an advantage to be distant from the objects which interfere with our practice.

In following the spiritual path we are gaining if we are able to free ourselves from the deception and the dominant power of delusions. From this perspective the brave person is the one who does not have to follow the influencing force of the delusions; who is trying to achieve freedom from being deceived or misled by delusion.

Even if we cannot remove the seed of delusion, we can apply some means of spiritual meditation, or spiritual practice which will prevent the delusion manifesting in our mind. In this way we can weaken the intensity of the delusions.

Next week is a teaching break due to discussions. The following week will be a written test. Geshe Doga encourages everyone to do the written test. According to the rules the written test is not compulsory, and exceptions are made for those who for personal reasons do not want to write the test. Instead they can use the time for meditation

In general the purpose of the written test is to encourage you to study and go over the text. It is a very important part of learning to have some discipline and do some study in your own time. Therefore Geshe Doga wishes to see everyone write the test. He fully understands people who do not want to do so. But most know how to write, and you have paper and pens. For Geshe Doga the test you present shows you have been doing study on the subject by yourself. So it is good if as many people as possible do this test.

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