

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

འདྲེན་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅུང་ས།



30 April 1996

Everyone should make sure that they cultivate the motivation of bodhicitta. The reason why we study and practise Lam Rim is to attain the highest state of enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

422.221.133: 3rd Cause of Delusions: Bad Friends (Cont.)

འདྲེན་ལམ་།

Last week we discussed what we called ill-friends, or wrong friendship, as a cause of generating mental distraction. It is important that we are not influenced by the distractions of poor friends.¹ If they are very fond of drinking alcohol or reading distracting books then we may develop the same habits. If we allow ourselves to be influenced by negative advice from our friends, then we may lose our virtuous qualities, and end up adopting their bad habits.

The point here is that we are our own best protectors, because if we examine our actions very thoroughly, we can see that many of them are harmful to ourself. If we take responsibility for our own actions, and if we utilise our discriminating mind, then we can get rid of all those internal and external stains which we possess.

In trying to remove all these internal and external stains we cannot afford to be overly influenced by outside friends, and especially the advice of a poor friend. If, for example you have taken moral precepts or observe special vows, it is so easy to lose those vows or precepts and engage in some immoral action if you follow the advice of a poor friend. Listening to poor friends and following their advice means that it is most likely that you will end up like them. Try to realise how much outer friends can distract the mind, thus causing more delusions to develop.

One of the reasons why we must be very careful in socialising with, or befriending others, is that it is very easy to be tainted by non-virtue, whereas virtue is something which is very difficult to attain. The only way, therefore, to ensure our progress in increasing our virtuous qualities, and decreasing non-virtuous qualities is to be self-guided, and to allow less influence from outer conditions. There are many causes of distraction. We can never find a friend with no desire for things, who never gets angry or jealous, or who has no pride. In a

way, everyone in the outside world is trapped by their desire for the pleasures of this life.

We do, however, have the capacity to do what we want. For example, if a friend becomes very angry it is not necessary for us also to also become angry; we do have a choice. If we wish to do so, we can protect ourself from doing the things we believe to be destructive. If we think that spending more time with a friend (or anyone with whom we are socialising) will increase our delusions or negative actions, then as far as we are concerned time spent with that person is not doing us any good. Whether or not that person is good or respected by others is not important. What is important is that if they influence us to increase delusion or negative actions, it is to our advantage to minimise the time spent with that person.

Showing Love and Compassion to All

If we were to be analytical about this subject of abandoning poor friends, then it might occur to us “Is this not contradictory to Buddha’s teachings that all sentient beings deserve compassion and loving kindness?” To avoid such doubt we must clearly know that when it says “Abandon the poor or bad friend” it really means to abandon the negative or non-virtuous actions which they do. It is not saying to stop showing compassion to them. In fact we have good reason to show them love and compassion, because they deserve our help. Likewise this teaching on abandoning poor friends is also applicable to those we regard as virtuous friends, because they also have some shortcomings or negative habits.

In association with this topic we find in the commentary text the “Ten Inner Treasures of Kadampa”. These ten are something to be practised, and you can refer to the text for these. (Refer to list at the end of this transcript.)

We shall understand the reason for studying mental delusions - identifying them, knowing their causes and results- very clearly in the context of our own experience. Then we see that the outcome of delusions is that they have incredible power to force us to do actions which are very undesirable and negative. Yet under the influence of those delusions we continue to perform those negative acts. Delusions, then, have the power to remove our choices. They completely overpower our mind and our actions, and we become powerless under their force.

Having understood delusions in the context of our own experience, then we can also understand delusions in the context of our outer friends, when they lose control and become angry. In that situation our friend is completely

¹ To make the text flow more smoothly, we have chosen to use the term ‘poor friend’ rather than ‘ill friend’. As the teaching makes clear later on, such people are not necessarily poor in every aspect of their personality, it is just that they are poor for the development of all aspects of virtue within us

overpowered by anger. Not only are their actions completely under the control of delusion, but they also experience emotions which are very tormenting and disturbing. They are suffering, they need help, they lack joy, peace and happiness. With this understanding we see the reason for us to show them compassion and love and not to cause them harm. Our feeling of wanting to be close to them is not desire or attachment, it is love.

If we also consider situations where there is conflict between partners in a relationship, the immediate cause is because both partners have engaged in negative activities, and have negative thoughts. In other words the conflict is between the negative thoughts and actions of both people. If even one partner showed positive thought and actions, instead of these negative thoughts and actions, then this conflict would not occur, or if it did it would be resolved quickly.

To a large extent, if we cultivate a better attitude in our mind, and adopt a better way of performing actions, then our life would not be too influenced by outside factors.

422.221.134: 4th Cause of Delusions: Reading Distracting Books

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The fourth cause of delusion is reading distracting books, which refers to those books which can arouse any delusion. For example books about war can stimulate anger or hatred as a direct outcome of reading that book, whilst books on sex can arouse sexual desire and lust.

It is obvious that what we find in sex books, (where the content is totally to do with the descriptions of kissing or copulation, and physical ways to stimulate desire) is all designed to stimulate sexual desire in the reader's mind. Likewise books on the causes of war stimulates our mind to investigate who is right and wrong, and then for no personal reason we feel anger towards one side. Other books can bring more ignorance to our mind, whilst yet others can bring more jealousy.

So these books are a cause of generating delusions, and have to be abandoned if we want to minimise the amount of delusion. On the other hand it is to our advantage to read those books which inspire more virtuous thoughts, like books on the life of great spiritual practitioners. In Tibetan, the stories of such masters are called "nam-tar" or "liberation". By reading these we can be motivated to undertake positive activities in our own lives.

422.221.135: 5th Cause of Delusions: Familiarity with Delusions

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The fifth cause of delusion is familiarity with them. This is concerned with how easily we can generate delusion in our mind, regardless of any cause or (obvious) reason. The arousal of such a delusion depends upon the degree of our familiarity with that particular delusion. We are all different with regard to the types of delusions we generate. For some people generating attachment is very easy, and does not require a highly attractive object. For them any object which has a slight degree of attractiveness can generate desire. For other people it is

the opposite; even a very attractive object will not stimulate them to generate desire. If a person is very familiar with anger, it will only take a very small circumstance for them to generate anger.

To a large extent these differences occur because of our familiarity with delusions in past lives. Any effort we make in this life to minimise this familiarity with any delusion, will at least bear fruit in future lives. We also have to make an effort to diminish our familiarity with delusions in this life, because if we are very habituated to them it will become harder and harder for us to counter them in the future. The best way to reduce this familiarity with delusions is practising meditation.

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

Edit methodology

The initial transcript is prepared from Alan Molloy's notes. These are checked with Damien Busby's notes by Alan Molloy and any differences noted.

Adair Bunnett then compares her notes against the typed transcript and prepares this edited version.

Edited version checked by Alan Molloy

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The Ten Innermost Jewels of the Kadam Tradition (Ten Inner Treasures of Kadampa)

There are three divisions:

- 1 The four entrustments
 - a Entrusting one's mind and thoughts to one's Dharma Practice
 - b Entrusting one's Dharma Practice to life as a beggar
 - c Entrusting one's life as a beggar to death
 - d Entrusting one's death to a barren cave
- 2 The three Vajra-like convictions
 - a The Vajra-like conviction to be stalwart towards any hindrances caused by friends or relatives
 - b The Vajra-like conviction to disregard the opinion of worldly people
 - c The Vajra-like conviction to firmly guard one's practice
- 3 The three changes in one's living status
 - a Expulsion from the ranks of people
 - b Finding oneself among the ranks of dogs
 - c Attaining divine ranks

For an explanation of The Ten Innermost Jewels of the Kadam Tradition refer to page 49 of the Tibetan Tradition of Mental Development by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey.