

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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འཇིགས་མེད་ཀྱི་ལྷན་སྐྱོད་ལ་གྲོགས་པའི་བཅའ་བུ་



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We should ensure that our motivation to practise and study Lam Rim is the highest, which is to achieve the state of enlightenment for the sake of all beings.

As we discussed in the last teaching, it is very important to identify not only the types of the delusions, but also their disadvantages.

According to Shantideva's text *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* delusions bring harm to our mind, but in a very pleasing way and so we tolerate them. In fact delusions are not worthy of that toleration. Essentially Shantideva is showing us that we have to be very alert and mindful in order to recognise the way delusion harms our mind and self, because any form of delusion is usually a very positive experience for us. What we need to do is ask ourselves whether delusions are of benefit to us, or if they in fact harm us. From this perspective we say the delusions are the inner enemy.

Delusion are not like an outer enemy, which we can usually recognise from their gestures or attitude towards us. If people come towards us with weapons raised it is very obvious that they intend to harm us. We need to be very thoughtful and look closely, otherwise it is extremely difficult to recognise delusion as an enemy which will destroy both our mind and self.

It is easy to identify the inner enemy of delusions by examining the delusion of desire, which is usually seen as something most necessary and beneficial. In our experience it is not something we regard as being a very destructive force. Rather our experience is that it is a friend which is of help to us. Likewise with the experience of anger. Through anger we classify objects such as a particular person as the real enemy, and then retaliate in order to destroy that enemy and protect ourself. We do this because of what we have perceived as these rather friendly aspects of delusion, we tolerate them and let them dwell within us.

So why do we tolerate delusion? It is because we haven't recognised their negative effects. If we do recognise the negative effect it is like having dust thrown in our eyes, which we can't tolerate as our eyes are so sensitive to dust. However with a clear knowledge of the harm that delusions cause, we can do something to counteract them.

The text *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* says that the more we show respect and consideration to the outer enemy, the more friendly and close to us they become. However showing the same friendship, consideration or

compromise to this enemy of delusion only makes them more powerful in their capacity to harm us.

This is really quite self explanatory. From our own experience with outer enemies, it is natural that if we show respect, and consider their views and needs, then they will become closer to us. With the inner enemy however, we should not be so lenient and friendly because this means that we let the delusions remain unharmed within us, thereby becoming stronger and more difficult for us to overcome.

The most important thing is to recognise that all our problems are derived from delusions. For most of us the major cause of problems is with our relationships. The suffering and difficulty people have to endure in relationships is not usually caused by being physically beaten up by our friends. The main cause for so much of the confusion which arises in our relationship with others is our own attitude. It is our own delusions which cause all the problems in our life.

If we compare the effects of delusions on one hand, and virtuous states of mind such as loving kindness, and compassion on the other hand, we can clearly see which of these two is more beneficial, and which is more harmful.

Think of any instance of unhappiness. If we examine the immediate cause, we find that the main cause is delusion within our own mind. It is the delusion in peoples' minds which brings disharmony at home and in the work place, and we all know how unpleasant it is to be in an unharmonious environment.

Imagine being part of a workplace with ten staff, where there is no mutual help for each other - not even a friendly and open gesture for each other. Everyone working in such an environment would feel very miserable. Even though we don't have the motivation to work in such a disharmonious place, we have to, since work is important to our livelihood. So we don't have motivation to go there in the morning, and returning to work each day brings more misery.

The main cause of such misery is the attitude of the people to each other. If your attitude to your superiors is one of jealousy, if to your equals you feel competitive, or if you are inflated with self pride when you deal with those below, then it is easy to say bad things and do harmful things to each other. The outcome of such disharmony is less productivity in your work, and it is very difficult for all the people who work there. On the other hand if the attitude of the people is one of loving

kindness and virtue (such as honesty), then this can bring harmony and friendship to the workplace. When the workplace is very harmonious, and where everybody is very understanding and helpful towards each other, it makes everyone very motivated to go to work and, there is less cause for friction there.

It is very obvious then, that delusion is the main cause of disharmony. The effect of such disharmony is not only on those who are directly concerned, but it also affects anyone else walking into that environment. They feel the lack of warmth and friendship there. As it makes a difference for us to live in a harmonious place (whether at work or home), we have to think what we can do to create harmony, and what we can do to prevent disharmony. Since the main cause of disharmony is delusion, we have to watch our own mind to minimise delusion, and in its place develop love and compassion.

Even if we cannot uproot delusion, we could at least reduce the very gross form of delusion of our own mind stream. Even that would make a great difference to our life, and make great contribution to those living close to us. It would give courage, and the interest and inspiration to practise tolerance, and generate a virtuous state of mind.

Through our effort we can work to the point where we feel different. Even though we can't always be satisfied and happy with life, but overall if we experience peace and joy, we can feel very stable and live a very happy life. If others see us in this way then that is a great success.

It is said that the elimination of delusion involves recognising

- the fault of delusion,
- the definition of delusion,
- the remedy to delusion and
- the cause of delusion.

In our discussion we have covered all these points. At the moment we are discussing the drawbacks of delusion, and the purpose of knowing this is to recognise all the faults of delusion, so that we can recognise the enemy.

It is said that in our practice we should be as serious as the famous Geshe Baen who said "My job is just to wait in front of the door of my mind with a spear as a weapon. When my enemy of delusion is very alert and influential, then I shall show more readiness to strike it, but when the delusion is relaxed so too I also relax."¹

Similarly Geshe Langri Tangpa said in his famous thought transformation text "examine one's continuum throughout all actions including sitting, walking, lying, sleeping. Examine all the actions, and if any delusion is perceived, then knowing that it will destroy both oneself and others, one immediately exerts an effort to apply the antidote." This also is a guide as how to overcome delusions, which requires us to practise mindfulness, and

through that to try to overcome delusion as soon as it arises.

We finish tonight's teaching here.

The next teaching will be on how karmic action is created through force of delusion.

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

Edited version checked by Alan Molloy

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¹ The translation on page 521 of the text *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* reads: "I guard the entrance to the fortress of my mind with a spear - the antidotes. At no time am I not doing this. When delusions are at the ready so am I. When they relax so do I"