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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

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4 March 1997

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Instead of beginning with our usual meditation Geshe Doga would like to say a few things.

If we reflect upon our current situation there are many reasons to feel fortunate, because we enjoy all the suitable outer and inner factors to achieve any type of personal goal that we seek in this life.

What is important to realise is that, because of the wonderful conditions we enjoy, there is no better time than now to achieve something in this life. So it is good to look back on one's life and see how much time has been wasted in sleepiness, laziness, indulging in mental distraction, and how much time has been wasted because of one's own delusions or ignorance.

Looking back on our life, there is no instance when we can say “I was absolutely happy” or “I was absolutely miserable in my suffering”. The time that has passed has been wasted, and we are unsure whether those times were good or bad, meaningful or meaningless. The time has gone.

Just as time has gone in the past, so it will go to the end of this life. Year by year we shall become older, the body will become weaker and, just as in the past, we shall not find a secure sense of happiness in the future. Whatever we achieve in this life is not a real means to secure lasting happiness or satisfaction in life, nor will it solve or prevent our problems.

If, however, we look inwardly, we see that as time passes, our mind becomes more and more addicted to delusion, laziness and objects of distraction, and because of this we cannot find true peace, rest or happiness within the mind. If we continue like this, then as old age chases our life, our mind becomes more disappointed and lost in life. We realise that we have found nothing in this life that is truly meaningful, and so a sense of emptiness, of life lacking purpose or meaning arises.

Now if we ask ourselves why we go through such misery, we see that it is not because we have not found pleasure in life. We have in fact found and experienced almost all the possible pleasures that exist in this world - good clothes, food, drink, and material happiness.

If we reflect on our own life like this we realise that for life to become happier and more peaceful, we must go beyond material happiness. The reason why we have not found such security is because the mind is distracted by the pleasures of the outer world, and has never thought to seek that happiness within oneself. We must create the causes for this peace and happiness within our mind.

## Why do material objects fail as a source of happiness?

We know very well from all our experience that material objects will not bring true satisfaction, and lasting happiness. If they could then the path to happiness and satisfaction would be very easy - just a matter of finding a beautiful place in which to live. But we know that no place can guarantee satisfaction and happiness, neither can any type of food, drink or any other material object. These pleasures are very limited, and not guaranteed to content our mind.

On the other hand, if we indulge in them, these material objects and pleasures can fill our minds with mental distractions and various types of delusion, with the result that our mind may become very distracted with endless thoughts concerning the past, present, or future. These thoughts can totally overpower us to the point where it is like we are fighting for our life against the enemy of our own thoughts. So we become the victim of our thoughts, and never stop worrying. While our mind is overpowered by such non-stop disturbing thoughts, then we cannot find any rest for ourselves. Led by these thoughts we feel depressed and hopeless about ourselves.

Under the overpowering influence of these thoughts it is easy to lose interest in doing anything. This is not because of any inability to achieve one's goals, but because of the overpowering influence of one's thoughts.

## Laziness

Then there is laziness.

Laziness means something which discourages one from doing things that are supposed to be done.

It is laziness if you decide to give up work because you cannot get up early, or you get home too late, or because it is too hard. Any excuse to work slowly or not to finish a piece of work is a form of laziness. This laziness arises when mental delusions arise in our mind. When the mind is overpowered by mental delusions or distractions, then we cannot achieve anything, or find any peace or any happiness in life. Understanding why external things fail to satisfy, and how in fact they bring more unhappiness and suffering we should look for a method which will help us to overcome mental delusions, and which will inspire us to make the utmost effort to reduce them.

## What are the remedies?

If we think “I can see and understand very clearly how harmful the mental delusions, laziness and distractions

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are to the mind, and I also understand that overcoming these three things will bring more inner rest, peace and happiness”, then we shall be even more motivated to undertake a practice which will overcome these three things.

What are the practices to overcome these negative states of mind? It is said that the remedy to:

- laziness is joyous effort
- distraction is meditative concentration
- mental delusion is directing one's mind towards dharma, or the spiritual way of thinking.

### **Being Aware of Both the Benefits and Disadvantages of our Actions**

Whatever we decide to do - whether it be meditation or study - it is important to know very clearly our purpose for doing this. If you decide to overcome laziness then you should know why you wish to do so? You have to be aware of both the benefits and disadvantages of your actions.

The shortcoming of laziness is lack of enthusiasm in our actions. Being influenced by laziness, it is possible that that we shall not do any work, and even if we do there will not be much effort put into it. Likewise if we meditate we might sit in the meditation posture, but not know what we are doing, or upon what object to meditate. Out of laziness then, the result will be a loss of clarity and purpose in our meditation.

So we have to study and know about the effect of our actions. Thinking of the effect of our actions, will naturally inspire us to do the right actions of body, speech and mind. A wrong action of either body or speech will ruin our reputation. Because we do not want this, by thinking about our loss of reputation will inspire us to do the right actions.

In essence spiritual practice or learning is all about how to live one's life better and in a more meaningful manner. Therefore we must take spiritual practice as a guide to improve our daily way of thinking and doing things. Whether walking, sleeping, or resting we must ask ourselves, “What is the right way of doing this?” It is very important to use all the teachings as a personal guide, and so become a better person.

Tonight we finish here. From next week we do normal sessions with meditation, teachings and so on. Geshe Doga would like to remind new members that they should receive a copy of the Study Group rules and conditions.

The topic of study for this year will be a commentary of the Lam Rim - the stages of the path to enlightenment. Geshe Doga thinks that there are maybe two weeks to finish stages of the path common to the person of middle scope. Then we shall begin teachings on the stages of the path for persons of great scope. So the focus of this year's teachings will be on bodhicitta - the essence of the teachings of mahayana buddhism.

We are indeed very fortunate to have this opportunity to hear teachings on bodhicitta. As His Holiness's late tutor said “Let alone someone trying hard to cultivate the

precious mind of bodhicitta, even someone who hears or says the word bodhicitta is fortunate enough.” So we should feel very fortunate and try to begin this year's teachings with a positive and joyous state of mind.

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

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### ***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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