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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

འཇིགས་རིམ་རྣམས་གྲོལ་ལཱ་བཅུངས།



26 August 1997

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Cultivate the bodhicitta motivation which is wishing to achieve buddhahood for the sake of all beings. It is to fulfil this ultimate wish of enlightenment that we are studying these lam rim teachings. We should also reinforce our intention to practise what we learn in our study, in order to gain control over our minds.

## 422.321.11 Immeasurable Equanimity (continued)

ཚད་མེད་བཏང་སྟོན་མས།

We noted in the last teaching that if you want to paint or draw something, it is very important that the base of your painting is very even and smooth, otherwise you will not get a good result. Likewise if our mental attitude towards all beings is not made even, then any form of love or compassion we show to other beings would become biased or partial. Therefore it is important to train the mind with this meditation of immeasurable equanimity.

If we focus on our own attitudes towards other beings we might see that they are very biased: we have this attachment for those who we call friends, and aversion for others who we feel are enemies. For those who are neither enemy or friend there are neutral thoughts, and indeed there is some sense of abandoning those who we regard as neutral beings. With this biased attitude we have no hope of cultivating impartial love and compassion for all sentient beings.

This biased attitude is the source of many faults which we can see in our attitude and actions. Because of this attitude we are very narrow, and even sometimes very foolish. We feel joy or pleasure if we see that good things happen to our friends, but if the same thing happens to our enemy, it brings unhappiness to our mind without any true reason. If we see our friend suffering with an unpleasant situation or problem we feel unhappy, but if we see our enemy with that same problem we feel good, and wish that they had even more problems and suffering. Without a clear understanding the way our mental attitude changes in respect to other beings is totally deluded.

We should first meditate on immeasurable equanimity. In this meditation the object being observed is other beings: friends, enemies, and neutrals. There are two systems for visualising the objects of immeasurable equanimity. According to Lama Tsong Khapa's text *Great Expositions Of The Stages Of The Path*, you think of the three classes of beings in subsequent order: first you think of the neutral person, then having trained the mind

in equanimity with that neutral person, you do the same with respect to the friend, then finally to the enemy. Then, having trained in equanimity using the enemy, you extend this towards all sentient beings.

According to other lam rim traditions, instead of meditating using these three objects in subsequent order you use all three (friends, enemies, and neutral persons), at the same time, and then try to train one's mind to cultivate the state of equanimity towards these three. The lam rim text we are studying uses this latter system of visualising the three objects at the same time, and so shall we.

To begin this meditation on immeasurable equanimity, the first and most important thing is to just sit in the meditation posture, and try to remove all external distractions. Then try to imagine three people in front of you: a very close friend, an enemy and someone who is neither of these two. Try to develop as clear a picture of each of these three as possible, and focus single pointedly on them.

Then check what sort of attitude you have towards each of those three beings. If we have a very clear picture of them, then we can see that we have attachment to the friend, aversion towards the enemy, and the thought of abandoning the neutral person. It is important for us to see that these three different attitudes are caused by ourselves.

When we think of, or see a person who we hate, then we produce all sorts of negative states of mind. Sometimes we feel a very strong hatred or anger, and want to retaliate, or hurt or harm that person. At other times we feel strong jealousy towards that person, or there may be a very strong sense of competitiveness, in that you do not want to be inferior to, or lower than that person. You may also feel pride, feeling you are far better than that person. Those who we call 'enemy', and for whom we have a great feeling of hatred, are in fact a source of misery and problems in our life. However the real cause is our own mental attitude towards those we regard as enemies. It is our own mind which creates this problem and which cultivates negative thoughts and states of mind, and these thoughts can become so serious that we cannot enjoy ourselves, or even rest. They become a source of great unhappiness in our life. The questions now we must ask are why do we have this aversion for this person, and why we hate or dislike that person so much? There is only one reason: we have received harm from that person.

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In order to counteract this feeling of aversion towards an enemy because they have caused us harm, we have to contemplate the section in the medium scope path on General Suffering. One type of suffering of cyclic existence is called Uncertainty Of Relationships. This means that friend turns to enemy, enemy to friend, neutral persons become enemies and so forth. Here we have to contemplate on how our relationships with others, (friend, enemy or neutral) are not fixed, and are constantly changing.

We have to try to realise, that the same person we now see as an enemy, has in fact been our friend on numerous occasions in the past. So try to contemplate how this person has been of help on numerous times in the past. If we think in this way of the benefit, help and support we have received from this person in the past, it eradicates our aversion to that person. As said before, aversion arises because we see that person as having harmed us. But if we see that person as having benefited and supported us, then it has the opposite effect - that of seeing them as a friend.

It is said in a sutra: Sometimes an enemy becomes a friend, sometimes a friend becomes an enemy, and at other times they become a neutral person who in turn becomes a friend, and so on. Therefore if you realise the uncertainty of the changes between friend, enemy and neutral beings, then it is very clear that we should not classify some as absolute friends, and others as absolutely enemies and so forth. If we have intelligence and good discrimination then we should not have attachment towards some beings. Rather it is best to always abide in virtue, or wholesome action without attachment and aversion.

The sutra also shows the truth of this uncertainty of friends and enemies. It is important that we are aware of this, because our mind develops a strong fixed concept that this person who we regard as a very close friend will be a close friend forever. In reality however, this person is not eternally stamped as a friend or enemy. They change. With a strong fixed view of friendship and enmity, it becomes difficult to accept change in our friend or enemy. Because it is very difficult to accept such change, if a friend rejects us we have trouble accepting that, and this causes much pain. We know the mental suffering this causes from our own experience.

Why is this pain called suffering? Who has caused the suffering to our life? We must examine this using our own intellect and knowledge. We know that the pain and hurt we feel when a close friend leaves us is not the same as the physical pain we would feel if we were hit with an external object. The main reason for our pain is that we are not internally accepting the change, and thereby not changing our view. Although things have changed externally, in our mind they are still our friend. Of course this does not mean to say that we should not be friendly, but here the focus is on our attachment. Although our friend has changed, internally, we still have attachment and want that person to be as close as before. If we could produce some understanding of the fact that there is no certainty that a friend will be a friend forever, then when a friend rejects one, accepting they

have changed can give some relief to the pain.

We can also remind ourselves of what other teachings say about the uncertainty of friends, enemy and neutral persons. The great meditator Jamgon Jamyang said, "After hearing a few good and bad words which are then exaggerated by my conceptualised thought, the person who I see now as the closest friend to my heart, can, when the sun rises on the next day, seem to be my worst enemy. So it is better to cut this thought of holding some close and others distant."

Shantideva also said in *Bodhisattva's Way Of Life*, "Not just in past lifetimes, but even in the present one you can see the continuous change of a friend to enemy, and vice versa." Following the medium scope teaching on the uncertainty of friend, enemy and stranger and reflecting upon our own life and how we undergo changes ourselves, we can observe external changes, and realise that everyone we meet undergoes suffering because of this.

By understanding this we realise the uncertainty of friend, enemy and so forth. We should think that we can utilise this realisation to overcome problems which we have in our relationships. For instance someone may hold strong hatred towards their parents, because the parent caused some problem. Geshe-la instructs that maybe it is true that they did something wrong to you, but it is also true they gave you kind support and help in life. You should make a list of how much help and harm you received, and it is possible the help items may number one hundred, and there is one harm, and because of this one harm you have this hatred. It is because of your mental attitude that you hold some as friend, and some as enemy.

In this session we mainly focussed on the enemy in meditation, and how we generate hatred, and how to overcome that hatred. Next week we shall focus upon the friend as an object of this meditation.

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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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