

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་བཅུངས།



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We shall meditate on immeasurable equanimity. As discussed in last week's class choose the right sitting posture and make sure that your mind is abiding within yourself, then think of three beings - friend, enemy, and neutral - and cultivate a state of equanimity. One very important thing is to make sure that our mind is not distracted by any other object.

We tend to forget what we are not supposed to forget and always remember what we are supposed to forget. Sometimes meditation helps us to remember the things which we are supposed to do. The very funny thing about our memory is that sometimes there are particular things which we do not remember, but then they suddenly come to mind in other circumstances. Quite often in an exam you cannot remember things, but as soon as you finish and walk out to the toilet then it comes to mind. This is the nature of our memory.

As usual you should try to cultivate the bodhicitta mind, and use that as the motivation to listen to the teachings. It is important that even if you cannot cultivate genuine bodhicitta, you still pray that you can generate the true bodhicitta in the future.

Immeasurable Equanimity: A Brief Meditation

Each of the three beings in front of you is respectively a cause to generate attachment, aversion, and the thought of abandonment, or a sense of disregard. In this meditation on equanimity, one also tries to contemplate the reasons why we have these three different attitudes. The obvious reason for aversion, or hatred for an enemy, is because you think that they have caused you some harm or loss. The reason why the thought of a friend spontaneously gives the pleasant feeling of joy and closeness, is because they have helped you by providing material things like food, clothing, or other forms of aid. Of course the reason why you have a sense of disregard for the neutral person is that you cannot recall having received any harm or help from that person.

In order to counteract these three different attitudes, and to cultivate an equal attitude towards the three beings we must recall the teachings of the medium stages of the path concerning the uncertainty of enemies, friends, and neutral beings.

As you do this you realise that even the person categorised as an enemy has, in the past, been your friend, and shown tremendous help and kindness. By doing this you overcome your hatred. Likewise the same person you see as a friend, and to whom you have some attachment, was an enemy in the past, and caused

you much harm. Doing this overcomes attachment. Similarly the neutral person has been both friend and enemy in the past, therefore there is no reason to disregard that person. This is a brief explanation of the meditation on immeasurable equanimity.

In this meditation we understand that these three types of beings are all the same, in that they have all been friend, enemy, or just in a neutral relationship with us. This gives rise to questions: which one should I love, which one should I hate, and which one should I ignore?

In the case of a friend, why be so attached to them when they have been an enemy many times in the past? This approach equalises our attitudes to all beings. We can see how in this meditation we are using logic and reason, the power of which can help our mind to transcend and to change. In our daily life the reason why our mind becomes so confused and worried about certain things, is just because the mind can not see things clearly, and lacks some understanding, or simple knowledge. Such simple knowledge might be just one reason, and that one reason might be enough to destroy our confused state of mind.

In the “Sutra requested by (a woman called) Dawa Chog”, the Buddha said, “I have murdered you numberless times in the past, and similarly you have sliced up my body numberless times in the past. Likewise you cannot count the numberless times sentient beings have killed each other in the past”. This sutra also shows the unreliability of friends, enemies, and neutral beings.

In general, we are also learning about the unreliability of our relationships with others. We can understand this by studying Scriptures such as Shantideva's *Bodhisattva's Way Of Life* and Gyalsas Togme's texts¹ and various Lam Rim teachings. These say that when your life is prospering, there are many who become friendly with. Even if you try run away from them, they follow you. Whereas if you become poor and destitute, they run away from you even if you seek them out. If we think about it, our own experiences of relationships with others confirm what the texts say.

It is important that we cultivate an awareness of the unreliability of friends and enemies, because they are one of the major sources of problems in our life. For example, it hurts us very much when a friend becomes an enemy. The reason a change in our relationship

¹ Editor: Bodhisattva Togme Sangpo was the author of *Thirty-seven Practices Of A Bodhisattva*

brings great shock and misery is because we are not fully aware of the changing nature of relationships, or the unreliability of friend and enemy. In our mind when we see someone as a friend or enemy, we see them as an absolute friend or enemy. Our mind is very fixed, so when change occurs, and a friend becomes an enemy, it is a great shock. Some people cannot cope with this change.

If we look further into the cause of why losing a friend causes such disturbance to our mind, it is because we are attached to our friend. Therefore attachment is something that we need to overcome in our relationships. In place of attachment, try to cultivate a true love, which means a true thought of giving and extending help to others. With true love, you will receive much help and benefit from your relationships with others.

We can see the importance of minimising attachment for our own sake, even if we cannot completely overcome it. Then friends will be less of a cause of suffering in our life. By doing, for example, the meditation on immeasurable equanimity, not only do we contemplate what we have learnt from the text, but also bring our own experience into our meditation. This can be very effective in gaining some realisations.

In this meditation on equanimity what we are trying to achieve is to overcome hatred for the enemy, strong attachment to friends and disregard for strangers. We also have to integrate these teachings into our practice. It is not enough to simply sit in meditation and say "I cannot hate an enemy because the same person has been my friend in the past". No matter how many reasons you see in meditation, they are not sufficient unless they help you to overcome, or at least minimise hatred towards enemies.

It is important to see the connection here between friends and enemies. Even if we can recollect receiving harm from a person, through this meditation we see how we received benefit and help from that same person in the past. In this way we see that the person we see as a friend, or an enemy, or a stranger has not always been our friend, or our enemy, or a stranger. It is very important that we see how this helps us to overcome hatred and attachment and so forth.

Besides this, we also have to see how hatred and attachment serves as a continuous source of suffering and misery in this life. For more happiness and joy and satisfaction in our life, we have to see how important it is to eliminate hatred and attachment. As we do this meditation, we have to have a general knowledge as to why we need to overcome and minimise hatred and attachment, and how through transforming ourselves inwardly we can find some meaning and happiness in our life. It is important to have some belief in the fact that we can find happiness inwardly. Otherwise our approach is no different from the material world where the whole focus of finding happiness is on outer objects. If we have more understanding of the fact that many of the problems which we undergo in life are related to our own attachment to friends, and hatred for our enemies.

In the thought transformation teachings of Geshe Langri

Tanpa², it says that it is possible to receive harm from someone in whom you have always placed great hope and trust. Most of us face becoming a victim of a close friend or relative, and this causes us some suffering. What we need to know is that the true cause of suffering is one's attachment to friends or relatives, and not necessarily that the friend has done something wrong, or that they have are lacking some worthy quality, as most people think. We have to see that such change is inevitable, and when it happens the reason it becomes a cause of suffering is because of one's attachment, because one's mind is very fixed with the idea that this person is very close. So it is important to use this meditation in order to at least minimise very strong, or fixed, hatred or attachment.

The idea that "If I find the right person then this will solve all my problems!", is also very deluded, because having friends is not necessarily a source of happiness. Indeed, having a friend can, in fact, be a source of problems. It is not just finding a friend, but there is also the thought that they will be with you forever. What if the friend later leaves? All this needs to be considered.

Many people have the thought that finding a friend is the most essential thing. So they believe that becoming rich, or influential, or having a very attractive and beautiful body will help to find that friend. Does being rich, good looking, and having many friends solve the problem of friendship? No, it does not. There are many wealthy, strong and attractive people who have more friendship problems because of their attractiveness.

We have to see that the real solution to life's problems and crises, and the real way to peace and happiness in life lies in minimising desire and hatred in the mind. If outer material objects were a cause of happiness then finding that object should eliminate suffering. There are even many teenagers who can see the benefits of meditation, and having a calm mind for dealing with the problems which they undergo at their stage in life.

The Meaning of the Dedication Prayer

The dedication prayer beginning, "Ge wa di..." which we recite at the end of teachings, means "From this vast merit that I collect, May I quickly achieve enlightenment and help all sentient beings do likewise". As we say this we must dedicate whatever merit we collected by listening to this teaching, as well as all other merits we have collected, and the virtues of all other living beings to achieve full enlightenment for all sentient beings.

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Note on authentication

The original typescript is prepared by Jenny Molloy from Alan Molloy's original transcript, which has been checked against Damien Busby's notes. Adair Bunnett then checks the typescript against a tape recording, and edits the text, which is finally checked by Alan Molloy.

² The Eight Verses Of Thought Transformation verse six "When someone whom I have assisted, and in whom I have placed great hope inflicts upon me extremely bad harm, I shall view that one as my supreme spiritual friend"