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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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Reinforce your bodhicitta motivation, which is to achieve the state of buddhahood for the benefit of all beings. With this motivation you should have the strong thought of putting all your effort into studying these lam rim teachings.

## **Equanimity (continued)**

In the last teaching we concluded that all sentient beings have served us equally as friends, enemies or as strangers. So therefore there is no reason for categorising any particular sentient being, as “my friend” because they have also been our enemy in the past. Likewise there is no reason to see other beings as enemies, and hold animosity towards them, since they have been our friend in the past.

Even in the relationships of this current life we see this uncertainty, where sometimes a friend can become an enemy. In this way one tries to remove this partisan attitude to other sentient beings: holding some close with attachment, and others distant with aversion.

## **Wrong Interpretations of Equanimity**

We should not think that since there is no certainty in friends and enemies, then what is the point of sustaining a friendship with others? Distancing ourselves, or discontinuing our friendly relationships with others would be using this teaching in the wrong sense.

What we are trying to achieve from this practice is to totally overcome attachment and hatred. It is true that friends will become enemies, or enemies may become friends, but we do not want to undergo suffering when that change occurs. Therefore we have to see that the suffering, which we undergo as a result of our changing relationships with others, is caused by our own delusions or afflictive emotions, in the form of our attachment and hatred. What we need to challenge and overcome, is attachment, which is not a positive emotion to have. We do not, however, want to eliminate our love or compassion for our friend. Our love and compassion is not for only when we see them as a friend. Even when they turn into an enemy, we still have to see them as someone who is deserving of our love and compassion.

## **Understanding Equanimity from our own Perspective**

Whether we see the reason why we should not have attachment or hatred from the point of view of our own sake (our own perspective), or from the perspective of the other sentient beings themselves, it is very clear that there is no point in having attachment and hatred.

We have to consider our own experience of attachment

and hatred, and how these influence our daily actions of the three doors of body, speech, and mind. We have to try and see from our own experience the sort of mental attitude we show to someone for whom we have attachment, and how that attitude influences our verbal and physical actions. Likewise we can investigate the influence of hatred upon our daily actions. Then we can see that due to attachment and hatred we accumulate a great number of negative karmas. Not only that, but as a result of these attitudes, we face many problems in life. Therefore from the point of view of our own life, having such attachment and hatred is a great source of problems and many negative actions.

## **Understanding Equanimity from the Object's Perspective**

Now from the point of view of other beings, is it right for us to call some of them friends, holding them close to our heart with attachment, and to call others enemy, regarding them with hatred? In reality all sentient beings are the same in that they all want happiness and to avoid suffering. So, from the point of view of other beings, we are not being just or fair if we say that only our friends deserve happiness, whilst our enemies deserve suffering.

From their side, those we see as enemies do not want suffering. If, from their side they wanted to suffer, then there would be nothing wrong from our side in causing them suffering and loss. But as this is not the case, it is therefore not right for us to treat them differently from a friend. As we discussed before, from their own side they have all equally been our close friend numberless times.

As the great master Kamalashila said, “There is no good reason to have such attachment and aversion, since there is no good reason if we look from the point of view of our own side, or from the side of other beings.”

It is important that we engage in this meditation on immeasurable equanimity until we gain some realisations. Even if it is not an inner experience, but even at just a very theoretical level we can cultivate this state of equanimity towards all beings, holding neither attachment nor hatred. As said before, in this meditation we have to try to see how all sentient beings have the same form of connection with us, in terms of friend or enemy, or in terms of giving help or harm, not only in this life but in all previous lives. There is no difference whether someone gives us help and benefit in this life, but harm in past lives. Therefore, there is no difference between receiving help or harm in this, or in past

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lifetimes.

### **The Ten Beggar Analogy**

We can think of all beings in terms of this analogy: if ten beggars come to you seeking help, you have to understand that you cannot favour one over the others, because they are all equally begging for help. They are all the same in being destitute, and needing food and drink.

We should make an effort in our meditation, therefore, to try to understand why we should not have attachment or hatred, and that emotionally we should see that all sentient beings are the same. Start this meditation by focussing on selected beings who you see as enemies, and through meditation try to minimise, or remove, this hatred. Then extend this same meditation to other beings. As we do this meditation over and over again, and develop our knowledge, then we can cultivate this feeling of equanimity towards all beings.

It is not easy to gain this feeling as an inner experience or realisation, but at least on the level of knowledge, when we are engaged in this meditation we can see all sentient beings with the same mental attitude.

It is said that if we could cultivate this state of equanimity within our mind, then we have established the foundation to generate the bodhicitta mind. On the other hand if we have not built this foundation of the state of equanimity, then there is no hope of cultivating bodhicitta.

Even though we are not yet able to gain true realisations of equanimity, it is still worthwhile to put an effort into this by praying, "May I be able to show such a state of equanimity to all beings at all times." We can also pray very strongly, "May I be able to always serve and benefit all beings." Make this prayer strong, or perhaps make the personal vow to never cause harm to any other being. Even a prayer from our heart such as this can be a cause to cultivate this state of equanimity, and thereby the mind of enlightenment and bodhicitta.

### **Discussion Night**

It is discussion night next week. The compulsory question for the test on the following week will be on the quotation from Atisha's *Lamp of the Path For Enlightenment*, which defines the person of great scope, "One who wholly seeks a complete end to the entire suffering of others because their suffering belongs to his own (conscious) stream, that person is a superior."

The one week meditation retreat commitment of the study group is coming soon. Geshe-la says it should run for six Thursday nights beginning on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October, and ending on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November. The 21<sup>st</sup> of November is an auspicious day, - when Buddha descended from heaven - so on that night we will have a Study Group puja. On each meditation night you have to do all the things that have been done in the past.

Start with cleaning the gumpa and so forth, and set out the water bowls. As many of you work and Thursday does not suit, then you can do the cleaning on the previous Sunday. Cleaning duty is one of the six preliminary practises, and cleaning the area is a process

of cleaning your mind. It is a good idea to review the teachings on what sort of mental attitude one should have when sweeping the area and so forth.

As to each night's meditation topic, last year we did a meditation on the Twelve Links. This year the topic is the bodhicitta mind. To help with this meditation Geshe Doga says to use the prayer *Foundation of all Excellence*. Read the prayer up to the verse "Please Guru Buddha send me blessings to generate bodhicitta in my mind". Then continue with the actual meditation, the duration of which will depend upon your own timetable, then continue with the rest of the prayer.

Part of the session is a recitation of Shantideva's *Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. Do the same as in previous years.

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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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### **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.