

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅུང་ས།



6 October 1998

Cultivate the motivation of bodhicitta, by thinking that the purpose of the teachings we are receiving is to benefit all sentient beings.

Our current topic of discussion is Transforming Adverse Conditions Into The Path, which is described under two subheadings:

422.321.231 Transforming By Thought

422.231.232 Transforming By Deed (or Action)

## 422.321.231 Transforming By Thought

བསམ་པས་བསྐྱར་བ།

[This has two subheadings:]

### 422.321.231.1 Transforming By Analysis<sup>1</sup>

ལྷོ་ལམ་བསྐྱར་བ།

We had some discussion on Transforming By Thought [by Analysis] in the previous teaching. What it means is not losing your courage or motivation for practising Dharma when facing mental and physical problems. We may confront some problems in our life which result in either physical hardship or pain, or which cause mental pain and suffering. If we allow mental or physical problems to discourage us and overwhelm our determination and spirit, then we cannot think of practising Dharma.

Of the two subheadings of Transforming By Thought, we have finished Transforming By Analysis, and we now turn to the second one.

### 422.321.231.2 Transforming By View<sup>2</sup>

ལྷོ་ལམ་བསྐྱར་བ།

To be able to eliminate problems through transforming our view requires some understanding of the correct view of emptiness, or the ultimate truth. Strictly speaking it is very difficult to apply this technique of Transforming By View without some understanding of this view of the ultimate truth. To explain it in a simple way, this view concerns the reality of these feelings of happiness or of suffering, and the reality of the causes of these feelings, which we perceive as being due to favourable and unfavourable conditions. We have to understand that all these are just the projections of our mind. If we investigate, we find that happiness, and suffering and favourable or unfavourable conditions do

not exist from their own side.

Rather what we call the happiness or suffering is something which arises by depending upon the collection of various causes and conditions. Happiness and suffering do not exist in any other way and yet the way they appear to the mind is different. To our mind they are very real and tangible, as if they existed independently from our mind. When we view things like this, then mentally we grasp at them. If, on the other hand, we can see that happiness and suffering and their causes do not exist from their own side then we can reduce mental grasping at those things.

Looking at things in this way we see how we create both positive and negative karmic actions as a result of having the wrong view of things. With a wrong view of things we cannot stop anger and desire from arising. Desire arises from this wrong view because the object of desire is perceived as existing independently of our perception. There is desire for the object, because of a misconception in our mind about the way in which the object exists. We see it as a pleasant attractive object, with this quality of attractiveness being an inherent quality of the object. With this misconceived thought we might think of acquiring that object, and so desire arises. As a consequence we then suffer frustration if that desire is not fulfilled.

It is the same if we investigate anger and hatred. The initial cause is that we have the wrong view that an object for which we feel hatred has an inherently unpleasant quality, so we feel resentment about that object.

Meditating upon this view of emptiness or ultimate truth will be effective in overcoming problems and their causes. If at the point of death we look back we would see that all the happiness, suffering and all the other experiences of this whole life are just short moments. If we perceive things like this, then we understand that all the events of life are like a dream. For example in a dream of your body drowning or being burnt in a fire you know that all these events are unreal. This idea helps us to decrease the strength of our view that all the events and conditions that we face are very real and concrete. Whether these events are right or wrong, good or bad, if we view them like we view a dream, then we can reduce craving for this life.

It is said that the visual perception of ordinary beings is always incorrect, because whatever we visually perceive has the appearance of being inherently or truly existent. For example from a distance an object might appear to

<sup>1</sup> Editor: The root text says: “When the container and its contents are filled with evil, turn this adverse circumstance into the path to full awakening.”

<sup>2</sup> Editor: The root text says: “Regard all deceptive appearances as being the four kayas.”

our eye sense consciousness as very beautiful but if you go closer to that object it is no longer beautiful. Due to some wrong perception of the object it is initially seen as something beautiful and then we become attached to that object. However on coming closer to that object and seeing that it is not beautiful, then our attachment diminishes. In this way we can understand that our delusions such as desire and so forth are all conditioned by our wrong view, which influences the way in which objects are perceived.

To clarify how our eye consciousness can be so misleading, Geshe-la explained how when they first arrived in India, and they were interned at Buxa, Geshe-la had to travel to Bodhgaya and arrived there at night. That night he bought some cloth shoes which looked good for the price and he thought that he had a bargain. But in the daylight he realised they were no good and his attachment for the shoes disappeared!

Lord Buddha said “One who has the view of true existence would have like and dislike. For one who has the view of falsity there is no like or dislike.” In other words as long as we have this wrong view of true existence, there will naturally be like and dislike for things. In this way all delusions arise from this wrong view.

At this point an outline of the teaching on cultivating bodhicitta is given. Of the two methods of cultivating bodhicitta we are now discussing Cultivating Bodhicitta By Exchanging Self With Others. This is elaborated in six stages:

1. Equalising self with others wherein you meditate to realise the equality of oneself with all other beings.
2. Disadvantages of self-cherishing.
3. Advantages of cherishing other beings.
4. These are two key stages, because even if we understand the equality of all beings, we still cannot stop desiring those close to us, and stop hating those who are distant from us. The reason why we have these attitudes of desire and hatred is because of our self-cherishing attitude, and being unable to replace this attitude with the one of cherishing others. Therefore we contemplate the disadvantages of self-cherishing, and the advantages of cherishing others.
5. Having made progress in these meditations the next stages are:
6. The actual exchange of self with others.
7. To intensify love and compassion, we engage in the Giving and Taking meditation.
8. Combine Giving and Taking with the breathing meditation.

To remember this method of developing bodhicitta, it is important to do as the root text says,

“Remember this by repeated recollection.”

So memorise these stages and recite them repeatedly to remind yourselves.

Next in the commentary is the section on how these two methods of cultivating bodhicitta can be combined together. In the commentary text we learn that they are combined into 11 stages of contemplation. You should

memorise those 11 stages in your own time.<sup>3</sup>

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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 Kathi Melnic 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.

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<sup>3</sup> Editor: The eleven stages are:

1. Equanimity
2. Recognising all sentient beings as your mother
3. Recollecting the kindness of your mother
4. The wish to repay that kindness
5. Equalising self with others.
6. Disadvantages of self-cherishing
7. Advantages of cherishing other beings
8. To intensify compassion we engage in meditation on taking
9. To intensify love we engage in meditation on giving
10. Superior intention
11. Actual cultivation of the mind of bodhicitta