

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

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Let us set the bodhicitta motivation by thinking ‘I wish to achieve the state of buddhahood to benefit all sentient beings and it is for this reason that I am listening to these lam rim teachings, and shall put them into practice.’

It is very important that we always try to retain a positive state of mind in all our actions whether they be going to sleep, getting up in the morning, or walking. With a positive state of mind we can eliminate all the negative or very ill states of mind. If we are consistently alert and mindful of not allowing any negative state of mind to arise, and always try to maintain a positive state of mind, then eventually this positive state of mind arises very easily, and we shall become familiar with it.

We all wish to be very good people. However we must realise that what makes us good people is maintaining this positive state of mind. Wishing to be a very good, kind person, whilst at the same time having a very negative and ill mind is a contradiction in terms. From a spiritual point of view if we try to relate whatever knowledge we gain from our study of Dharma to our inner continuum, then that knowledge is not just learning. Rather it actually has an impact upon our life. When knowledge is related to our inner continuum our mind becomes more positive, and as our mind becomes more positive then our actions also become more positive. Through cultivating a positive state of mind not only do we transform ourselves into a better person, enjoying more peace and happiness, but we bring benefit to those around us and so they become happier and this brings benefit to ourselves and others in future lives.

## **The Eleven Stage Contemplation to Develop Bodhicitta**

We have discussed how the two methods of cultivating bodhicitta can be combined into eleven stages of contemplation. After learning about these eleven stages the next step is to use them in practice. Such a practice implants a true seed in our mind to produce bodhicitta, and universal love and compassion.

The eleven stages are:

1. Contemplating immeasurable equanimity.
2. Recognising all sentient beings as one’s mother.
3. Remembering their kindness in a very special manner.
4. Repaying their kindness in a special manner.
5. Equalising self with other.
6. Disadvantages or faults of self-cherishing.
7. Advantages or qualities of cherishing others.
8. Actual exchange of self with others in which one firstly undertakes the Giving meditation, which is

primarily focussed upon giving loving kindness to all sentient beings.

9. Applying the technique of Taking, in which one primarily focuses upon cultivating compassion for all beings. With the technique of Taking you have to generate a strong visualisation that all sentient beings are free of suffering, and then you place them in a state of everlasting happiness.
10. Superior Intention is cultivated by realising that the love and compassion that you extended to all living beings by doing the Giving and Taking meditation existed only in your mind as a heartfelt wish. Superior Intention, however, is not just a wish in your mind, but you actually take upon yourself the task of liberating all beings, freeing them from suffering, and giving happiness.
11. You then realise that the only way to achieve this task is to become enlightened or achieve the state of buddhahood, so you generate the bodhicitta wish to attain buddhahood in order to liberate all sentient beings.

Doing this profound meditation, (combining both methods), for even a few minutes, has the great benefit of implanting the bodhicitta seed in your mind. So you can see why we are so fortunate to have the opportunity to study and practise these teachings on bodhicitta. Rejoice and pray that you will always be able to hear about bodhicitta, which is the heart of the Lord Buddha’s teachings, and that through the practice of bodhicitta you will be able to become like those great Mahayana teachers, Maitreya and Manjushri.

## **Incorporating Tantric Practice**

For auspicious reasons, and the long term benefit of following tantric practice, you can also meditate on bodhicitta by way of taking the result into the path, which is a technique used in tantric practice. You visualise yourself as Shakyamuni Buddha, and then from your body you emit rays of light to all the other beings that you imagine surrounding yourself. These rays of light purify all their suffering, together with the causes of the suffering of all beings, placing them into the state of buddhahood. Having visualised this, cultivate a sense of joy and delight that you have freed all sentient beings and placed them in a state of buddhahood.

These rays of light which you manifest symbolise the omniscient exalted wisdom of Lord Buddha, and represent the power of the Buddha’s omniscient mind of exalted wisdom. Sometimes these rays of light are visualised in five colours which represent the five types

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of exalted wisdom. The reason why we have to view these rays of light as being in nature the omniscient mind is to remove doubts as to how these rays of light can free others from suffering and lead them to enlightenment.

### **What do we do when we arise from the sitting meditation?**

When we arise from the sitting meditation the Thought Transformation root text says

*'There are three objects, three poisons and three sources of virtue.'*

This concerns our practice after the sitting meditation session, in which we cultivated love, compassion, realisation of emptiness and so forth.

The three objects mentioned in the root text are enemy, friend and indifferent beings. The three poisons or poisonous minds are desire, hatred and ignorance. The three sources of virtue or the three virtuous minds are non-attachment, non-hatred and non-ignorance.

When we arise from a sitting meditation we confront various pleasant, unpleasant or neutral objects. Usually a pleasant object stimulates desire, or attachment in our mind. The text says that rather than just grasping at that object with desire and attachment we should think of our practice. We should remember that it is not just ourself, but countless other beings who experience these same emotions of desire whenever they see any pleasant or beautiful object. So try to think 'May this desire or attachment that I am experiencing be the desire of all sentient beings', thus taking the desire of all sentient beings upon yourself. Having done this, wish that all other beings will experience the virtuous mind of non-desire or non-attachment in place of desire.

Hatred is generated towards any unpleasant or unattractive object, so think 'Through the hatred which I am now experiencing may all other sentient beings be free of hatred'. Just as all other beings generate hatred when they see any unpleasant object, so you wish that through the hatred you experience all sentient beings will be free of hatred, and instead experience the virtuous mind of non-hatred.

Towards neutral or indifferent objects there is a sense of ignorance through indifference. So think 'May all sentient beings be free of such ignorance caused by indifference towards neutral objects.'

Then go beyond taking upon yourself the desire, hatred and ignorance generated by other beings when they seeing pleasant, unpleasant and neutral objects, to consider how as a result of the influence of these three poisonous minds, they accumulate negative actions which are the cause of future lower rebirth or cyclic existence. Then try to think of taking upon yourself all the negative actions other beings have done which could throw them into lower rebirth or cyclic existence. Wish that they have immunity from both negative actions and their results.

The purpose of these post-meditative practices is to generate love and compassion and thereby to generate bodhicitta mind. When we talk about showing love and compassion to others, it is a very deep level of compassion which is different to the compassion which people naturally feel when they see another being enduring pain or hardship because of their unfulfilled

desire, or because they are unable to cope with their hatred, or because of their ignorance. Seeing others undergoing suffering like this we naturally feel sympathy and we don't feel hatred. [What we are doing in addition is to] cultivate compassion and feel sympathy for them because their actions are going to bind them in cyclic existence and throw them into lower rebirth. Based upon an understanding of the type of karma they create and the results of that karma, this type of compassion is deeper and more profound than the compassion which arises when we see other beings undergoing suffering.

Whatever one experiences - illness, disputes with others, or any crises in life - try to see that the source of these unwanted events is the self-cherishing mind. Try to accept that hardship or problems extinguish the self-cherishing mind and are purifying agents. So rather than feeling very depressed or negative about the problems that we face, try to feel positive that these are all the outcome, or ripening result, of a cause which we have created. Thinking in this way helps us to maintain a positive state of mind about our problems. Thinking 'May no other being experience the same problem' and taking upon yourself their burdens further strengthens this positive state of mind.

Think of how a merchant or a farmer will happily accept any type of hardship when they know that hardship is the way to success and the payoff. So they rejoice in their suffering because it is worthwhile. Similarly with Thought Transformation practice we can feel delight and joy in all the problems we confront in life. All the incidents we experience become a favourable condition to progress on the spiritual path, and to practise Dharma. When we do this then no matter what the situation that we face, we always have inner peace and happiness. As it is said in the text these Thought Transformation teachings are like the city which is the source of joy and happiness.

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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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