

# 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་བཅུངས།



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Having cultivated the bodhicitta motivation, think also of applying this teaching to overcome all negative states of mind.

## 422.321.231 Transforming Adverse Conditions Into The Path By Transforming Our Thinking (continued)

We need to have a right way of thinking in times of both happiness and in sorrow, because it can be very effective: at the very least adverse conditions do not become worse. These teachings tell us that worrying about problems in life, even physical hardship or pain, is not a healthy way of thinking. In fact worry can cause even more pain and hardship. These Thought Transformation teachings remind us that others also undergo suffering, some of which is far greater than what we experience, and that we can utilise our own suffering as a way of alleviating their suffering.

We have to consider the kind of view we need to cultivate in those situations when we find happiness and are enjoying ourselves, and in those when we experience suffering. The Thought Transformation teachings help us in both these situations. Furthermore it is our way of thinking that determines whether favourable or unfavourable living conditions become a source of happiness, or a source of suffering.

It is not just the obstacles or unwanted things in life that are necessarily the enemy. It is also the conditions which we normally regard as very favourable, such as friends, children and all the beautiful things which we believe will bring more support, happiness and joy in life, that can also cause us suffering. These too can become enemies, and much of the suffering and problems we undergo are associated with them. Why is this? The reason has a lot to do with not being able to adopt the right way of thinking.

It says in the *37 Practices of a Bodhisattva*:

Abandoning one's home country is a bodhisattva's practice.

This implies that when we generate too much attachment to them, even very good places and friends can be a cause of suffering. Thus is due to our own way of thinking or mental perspective whereby even favourable situations become unfavourable. Likewise the reverse is true. Through Thought Transformation techniques we can transform unfavourable conditions which cause unhappiness, into favourable ones. In other words we can transform unhappiness into happiness.

We should also try to bring *The Eight Verses of Thought Transformation* by Geshe Langri Tangpa into the context

of this topic. For instance one of the verses of his text says:

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.

If we face such a problem, then the way to overcome it is to recite this verse from the text and for inspiration pray to Geshe Langri Tangpa that the current situation one is in will no longer be a cause of suffering or hurt. As you recite this verse imagine that Geshe Langri Tangpa is in front of you, and through receiving his inspiration and blessings you begin to integrate the meaning of these teachings into your practice. Practising Thought Transformation in this way is very effective, just like pouring water onto a fire. It soothes the mind and removes all the suffering that we experience.

## 422.321.232 Transforming by Deed

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The root text says:

Possess the four preparations, the highest of means.

The four preparations are:

- 1 Accumulation of merit.
- 2 Purification of obscurations.
- 3 Offering tormas (or ritual cakes) to interfering spirits.
- 4 Propitiating Dharma protectors.

What we learn in this section is that experiencing unwanted suffering, and not finding the happiness we desire is a message to us. The message is that we cannot find happiness because we have not gathered the right conditions, and the fact that we experience suffering indicates that all the conditions to produce suffering are present.

The natural tendency is wanting happiness and not wanting suffering. As we do not want suffering, then we must prevent its causes, and as we want happiness, we need to think of creating the causes for it. Therefore we should try to understand that in order to find happiness we have to accumulate merit through virtuous action, and to prevent suffering we have to avoid non-virtuous actions.

As a means of accumulating merit and purifying negativities we therefore engage in the four preparations which include: making offerings to the three objects of refuge and giving charity to the poor; giving tormas to interfering spirits to protect us from receiving harm; and engaging in purifying practices to purify negativities.

## 1. Accumulation of merit.

All [positive] actions performed by body, speech and mind accumulate merit. We take refuge, generate bodhicitta, make offerings and pray to the gurus to bestow upon us inspiring blessings, so that we shall be able to joyfully endure whatever hardship we face in life, even sickness or death, with the thought of compassion for all living beings.

## 2. Purification of obscurations.

As part of the preparation for purifying negativities try to think that any unwanted suffering is an alarm, alerting us of the need to apply the practice of abandoning negative actions, since all suffering is the result of negative action.

### The Four Forces of Purification

In brief these four forces are an essential practice for purifying ourselves of all the negativities which we accumulate. Of course we cannot guarantee that we shall not accumulate any negative actions in future, however it is said that if we apply these four forces we can at least prevent the suffering result of negative actions from arising.

- 1 **Force of Regret:** Having created a negative action, we should not be complacent about it. Unless it is purified we shall have to face the consequences which are suffering and unhappiness, which we definitely do not want. Therefore for any negative action that we have committed, we need to feel regret as if we had consumed a deadly poison. It is said that showing a great sense of remorse and regret purifies at least half the result of any negative action.
- 2 **Force of Promise:** Resolving to ourselves not to repeat such negative actions again is considered as a very effective element of the purification process.
- 3 **Force of Object:** We engage in spiritual practice wherein we take refuge in the Three Jewels, generate bodhicitta and so on, as the third component of purifying negativities.
- 4 **Force of Remedy:** This includes any virtuous or wholesome actions that we accumulate, since all virtuous actions act as a remedy to purify negative actions. In the Force of Remedy however, we can engage in specific practices of remedy.

There is a saying, 'Negativity is light to the wise, but is heavy to a fool.' Even if you are wise you can still create negative actions, however because of your knowledge of this purification practice then these negativities are not too heavy. Whereas if negativities are not purified, they then become a severe cause of suffering.

## 3. Offering tormas (or ritual cakes) to interfering spirits.

The third preparation of offering tormas to interfering spirits can be done in two ways:

- 1 Cultivate some sense of gratitude towards interfering spirits for all the harm and suffering they have caused you. All these sufferings become a cause to develop and cultivate the bodhicitta mind. By causing you suffering,

these interfering spirits have done you a great favour. So you request even more suffering from these interfering spirits, so that the suffering of all living creatures may ripen upon yourself.

- 2 If the previous way is not feasible, try somehow to cultivate love and compassion towards the interfering spirits who bring suffering to your life rather than hatred. Out of this love and compassion, engage in the ritual practice of offering cakes to the interfering spirits in order to please them. While making this offering request the spirits to bring no harm nor place any obstacles to spiritual practice.

## 4. Propitiating Dharma protectors.

The fourth preparation, is to rely upon or propitiate the Dharma protectors. Request and pray for support and trust that the Dharma protectors will support and protect you in your spiritual practice.

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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.