

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

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ཅུ་ལམ་རིམ་རྣམས་གྲོལ་ལག་བཅུངས།



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It is important that our motivation to study the Dharma is bodhicitta. Then the Dharma practice we do, such as listening to or giving the teachings, becomes the Mahayana Dharma.

## 422.321.25 The Measurement of Having Trained the Mind

སྒོ་འབྲུང་བའི་ཚད།

The next main heading is The Measurement Of Having Trained The Mind. Regarding this the root text says

*“All Dharma collects into one intention”.*

‘All Dharma’ includes all the sutras or teachings given by Lord Buddha, as well as all the commentaries given about these teachings. The ‘one intention’ means that all these teachings have the same intention, which is to present the remedy to the self-grasping view, and the self-cherishing attitude. If we had to summarise the essence of the Buddhist teaching, it is the remedy to the mental delusions: all the teachings are based on remedying mental delusions.

The Buddhist Scriptures are also described as ‘the studies of the mind which deal with inner knowledge’. We have to understand that when we put these teachings into practice, what we are doing is counteracting the mental delusions within ourselves.

Keeping in mind that the main purpose of all the Buddha’s teachings, and the commentaries to those teachings by the later masters, is counteracting the mental delusions of sentient beings, one should try to examine and make an assessment of one’s own spiritual practice, which might be listening to, studying, contemplating or meditating on the teachings. Whatever the practice, we do it to achieve the purpose of Buddha’s teaching. As said in the lam rim, the teachings on mind training can be regarded as a scale to measure the qualities of one’s actions of the three doors. If these actions of the three doors or spiritual practice, are in accord with the true purpose of the teachings, then they should be influenced less by mental delusion such as pride, jealousy and competitiveness. So we try to examine the performance of our spiritual practice or our actions, by comparing our current behaviour and state of mind with our actions and state of mind prior to meeting the Dharma teachings.

If we have a clear understanding of the purpose of all the teachings, we can see very clearly that if we minimise mental delusion by our practice, then this shows that we have trained our mind through these Dharma teachings. It also indicates that the teaching is benefiting us, since we can see that we have fewer mental delusions, and so we have more peace and happiness, and our mindstream

is more tamed.

As we study we can also understand that our progress in the practice of minimising delusions is only possible if we counteract both the self-grasping view, and the self-cherishing mind. Because if we challenge and diminish the influence of the self-grasping view, then naturally all mental delusion is minimised. So in terms of the root text the ‘one essence’ [or ‘one intention’] of all the Buddha’s teachings is to counteract the self-grasping view, and thereby counter all mental delusions.

We know that the way to measure the success of our spiritual practice is by the amount of self-grasping we find. If our self-grasping decreases, this indicates success and that we have trained the mind. If, however, the self-grasping view has not been reduced and weakened, then this indicates that the mind has not yet been trained.

The next line of the root text says

*“Retain the two witnesses of foremost importance”.*

This line also concerns the measurement of the degree of having trained the mind. To measure this there are two types of witnesses - ourself and outer witnesses.

The best witness for our behaviour is ourself. We know best how we have behaved and practised. [We know when to feel ashamed and when] there is no need to feel ashamed. There are also outside witnesses to our behaviour.

It is said that it is best to be like the finest mango fruit, which is ripe both inwardly and outwardly. We are internally ripened if we have gained spiritual realisations and have fewer mental delusions. Then from our own side we are true spiritual practitioners. The genuine inner practice we do can show outer signs which other people can see. If you are truly good hearted and kind, then others see that you have these good qualities. In this case you are ripe both internally and externally. Then there is the case where one has not gained spiritual realisations yet may still appear as though one has. There may even be a pretence of living a life of pure morality, as if one is a very true and pure spiritual practitioner. It may even appear to others that one has some experience of transforming the mind. This is dishonest and not something you should do.<sup>1</sup> Even worse is when one possesses neither any worthy inner qualities, nor appears to others to have any positive qualities. In this case one is [like a mango that is] ripe neither internally nor externally.

It is said that we should try to be pure both outwardly and inwardly. If we are pure outwardly then we shall

<sup>1</sup> Editor: This is like a mango that is ripe on the outside but unripe on the inside.

not receive any complaints or unpleasantness from outside people. If we are pure inwardly, then we are enriched by many spiritual qualities.

What is most important, however, is that we are always able to judge ourself, based upon our understanding of the spiritual teachings. Then, as a person we shall become more honest, and our life more stable and self-sufficient. When we lack this ability to judge ourself and our own actions, we are easily influenced by outside conditions, such as what other people say to us. If they praise us then immediately we become happy. If, soon after, they say something negative then we become unhappy. If we leave it to these outer conditions to shape our life and judge our performance, then it is hard to make any progress or achieve any success, and hard to control our thoughts, feelings and emotions.

Whereas if we are our own witness to the actions we do, then if we are very honest we see what positive qualities and faults we have, and what good and wrong actions we do. If we are a true witness to our actions, then when someone comments that our behaviour is unsatisfactory in some way, we shall know whether or not it is true. If it is true, even if it is a criticism, then we can acknowledge and accept it. If it is not true, then there is no reason to get angry or feel unhappy, because we would know that it is not true. It is part of the bodhisattva's practice to have no attachment about either fame or reputation. Rather a bodhisattva who possesses a great wealth of knowledge and qualities is always very humble, showing great humility. We should always try to follow the way of life of a bodhisattva. In particular the focus here is upon one's own self, trying to correct one's own mistakes, while at the same time developing as many positive qualities as possible.

The next line of the root text says:

*"One is always accompanied by only joyful thoughts"*

This shows that you can always retain joy and happiness in the mind through this practice of mind training or Thought Transformation. The reason why people do not always enjoy happiness and a joyful mind is often due to their circumstances of living, and the conditions of their life. We can see that whether these conditions are favourable and good, or unfavourable and bad, people's minds can still be restless and unhappy. Many people are very restless, completely unhappy and deprived of peace as a result of worrying about their large amount of wealth and possessions. Although they are rich, they want to become even richer. They never stop worrying about how to secure their wealth, or how to increase it. So mentally there is no moment of joy. If you are not wealthy then you do not experience this, but there are very many wealthy people who say that they are imprisoned and controlled by their wealth, and that their life is miserable. Too much wealth can be a source of mental anguish.

If we are following spiritual practice we are supposed to renounce wealth and be detached from worldly possessions. However it is possible that even if you have no desire to accumulate wealth in life, you may still find that wealth will come to you, and you will become rich. If this happens you will not want to suffer as worldly people do. You can overcome this suffering caused by

wealth or by favourable external conditions by applying this Thought Transformation mind training.

Others undergo tremendous physical and mental suffering because of poverty. They do not find any rest or peace because they are so desperate in their search for wealth. If they also apply this teaching of mind training they can get a clear picture of their situation. Suppose that you have been making a tremendous effort to improve your situation but still there is no wealth. Why does nothing happen to reward your efforts? It can be seen in the light of karma - the law of cause and effect. Through this one can at least reduce frustration and inwardly be at peace to the same degree as someone who is wealthier.

When it says 'One is only accompanied by joyful thoughts', the implication is that whatever our conditions of living, whether favourable or not, we can still maintain a happy and peaceful state of mind by applying these teachings on thought transformation, because they have the potential to transform all conditions into the spiritual path. Whether they are good or bad, when these conditions are transformed they are no longer a cause of unhappiness. When we can see this, we appreciate the benefits of Thought Transformation.

As you consider more and more instances of how you can become easily happy or unhappy, such as the times when we become happy when we are praised, or unhappy when we are condemned, criticised and put down, we see that this is something which we can overcome through the mind training practice. Then we do not become particularly upset or displeased when someone criticises us, nor particularly pleased when praised. With mind training we achieve a very even and balanced attitude which can bring contentment and reduce the amount of desire in our mind.

In the next two lines the root text says:

*"A reversed attitude indicates transformation.*

*One is trained if one is capable even when distracted."*

Here the examples of an experienced and inexperienced rider are used. A skilled and experienced rider will not fall off the horse if their mind is distracted, or even if the horse suddenly moves or jumps. An inexperienced unskilful rider however, would fall off if they were not concentrating, or the horse suddenly jumped or moved. This is similar to the person whose mind is fully trained in Thought Transformation; they are always capable of practising the Dharma. Even if their mind is distracted, or not focused, a fully trained practitioner can show tolerance and patience to someone who is unpleasant, or using harsh speech towards them. Whereas someone who is following this Thought Transformation practice but who is not yet fully trained may easily become angry or disturbed if someone says or does something bad to them when their mind is not focused on Dharma. You can lose our temper easily in that situation. Then later on when you look back, you see that it was your own fault, and by applying some remedy you can avoid holding the residue of your anger or hatred towards that person. This shows how we can become fully stable in our practice in all circumstances if we master this Thought Transformation practice.