

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།



1 December 1998

As usual [a reminder that] it is important to firstly cultivate the bodhicitta motivation by thinking that these lam rim teachings which we are receiving are to attain the fully enlightened state of buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings.

As to the commentary on the *Seven Point Thought Transformation* we are up to the fifth main heading, The Measurement [or Criteria] of Having Trained the Mind in Thought Transformation, which we began to discuss last week.

Line two of the fifth verse reads¹:

‘A reversed attitude indicates a transformation’.

Since Thought Transformation teaches us to realise death and impermanence, a sense of true renunciation, and true bodhicitta within our mind, so the measurement or criterion of having fully trained the mind in Thought Transformation, is mainly one of gaining these three realisations.

How do we know whether we have gained these three realisations? The root text says that a ‘reversed attitude indicates a transformation’. Realisation of death and impermanence means we have reversed our attitude of strong attachment and clinging to this life. The indication of true renunciation is reversing our attitude of strong attachment to the pleasures of samsara. Likewise the indication of having cultivated bodhicitta mind is when the strong self-cherishing attitude is reversed, or completely eliminated.

There is no need for further explanation as to why these three realisations are the main goal of our spiritual training: they correspond to the three scopes of the path. The realisation of death and impermanence is the main training for a person of small scope; cultivating renunciation is the main practice of a person of medium scope; and cultivating bodhicitta is the main practice of a person of great scope.

It is important to gain some understanding of how these three realisations incorporate all spiritual training, and why they are essential practices. It is said that if any spiritual practice we undertake is not aimed at overcoming one of these three attachments (ie to this life,

to samsara or to the self-cherishing attitude), then that practice does not reflect true Dharma practice. So a true spiritual practitioner must gain these three realisations. Cultivating these three realisations will even be of benefit to non-spiritual practitioners, in terms of gaining more peace and happiness in this life.

At a personal level we should try to recognise these three strong attachments (ie to this life, to samsara and to self-cherishing) within ourselves, and realise that unless we purify them, they are the main stains or obstructions to any progress in what we do. If your practice cannot break your strong attachment to this life, then what you do will not serve as a cause to bring a better future life, and it will not be a spiritual or Dharma practice. In this sense a strong attachment or concern for this life is a hindrance to achieving a better future life. Likewise with strong attachment to samsara and the pleasures of this transient worldly existence, you cannot achieve liberation from cyclic existence, and whatever you do will not serve as a cause to achieve liberation. So your attachment is an obstruction. Similarly the self-cherishing attitude is a stain or obstruction to achieving the highest enlightenment or state of buddhahood. So try to recognise how these three attachments are obstructions within our mindstream. Try also to recognize that we have the potential to cultivate the opposites of these three, which are the realisation of impermanence, renunciation and bodhicitta. So we have the potential to secure a better rebirth, or even to secure liberation from samsara or even to achieve the highest enlightenment or buddhahood.

What is important is to try to ensure that whatever spiritual practice we do falls within these three topics, and approach our practice with this understanding in mind. For example approach the small scope by taking refuge, or meditating on death and impermanence or thinking of karma or the law of cause and effect, with the aim of minimising attachment to this life through our practice. If we could reach this goal of minimising attachment to this life through this practice, then we shall find that we become a more relaxed and contented person.

Essentially we practise Dharma to make ourselves a better person, and to improve our mental attitude. The main obstacle to achieving this very wholesome and positive transformation in our mind is not external: we must recognise that it is an internal obstacle. If we clear away all internal obstacles we find that we are very less vulnerable to outer hindrances. On the other hand if our

¹ Editor: There are several versions of this text “The seven point thought transformation”. The version Samdup Tsering, our translator, is using here is the version found in “Advice from a spiritual friend” by Wisdom Publications. In this translation this line is the second line of the fifth verse but in the Togme version, as used by Pabongka Rinpoche in “Liberation in the palm”, this line is the fourth line. There are also many other differences in the versions of this text.

inner hindrances are not overcome or minimised, then even a very minor outer obstacle can become a very major one.

The commentary mentions five signs which indicate having been trained in Thought Transformation. These are called the Five Greatnesses.²

“You will have the five signs of great mastery”.

First Greatness: being a great ascetic

The person trained in Thought Transformation becomes one whose mind cannot easily be effected by any mental delusion; who has tremendous patience and tolerance for any mental or physical suffering or any harm received from others; who, when confronting any unfavourable conditions, will not be disturbed by any mental delusion, and who will exhibit great patience and tolerance.

Second Greatness: being a great bodhisattva

One who is fully trained in Thought Transformation is fully trained in the bodhicitta mind.

Third Greatness: being called a great practitioner of virtue

The practitioner of Thought Transformation will integrate all the virtuous actions such as the ten virtuous actions or the ten Mahayana virtuous deeds into all their actions. The ten deeds or ten acts of dharma sometimes refer to the ten perfections but here refers to the Ten Virtues or Ten Deeds Of Dharma

Maitreya's text *Ornament for Clear Realisation* calls these ten deeds the Ten Dharma Deeds, whereas in Gyal Tsalje's *Essence of Clear Explanation* they are described as the Ten Deeds Of Perfection. However, the Ten Dharma Deeds are generally described as they are listed in Lama Tsong Khapa's commentary, and they are:

- 1 Copying or writing scriptures
- 2 Making offerings
- 3 Generosity
- 4 Listening to Dharma
- 5 Reading (or reciting) Dharma
- 6 Memorising the words of scriptures, or Dharma texts
- 7 Teaching Dharma
- 8 Reciting or using Dharma texts as a regular recitation
- 9 Thinking or contemplating the meaning of Dharma
- 10 Meditating on the meaning of Dharma

Fourth Greatness: being called a great holder of vinaya or moral ethics

A person trained in thought Transformation will refrain from even the smallest and most minor non-virtuous action.

Fifth Greatness: being called a great yogi

The fully trained Thought Transformation practitioner is engaged in the Mahayana path.

These Five Greatnesses are the five qualities which are possessed by one who has fully trained the mind in Thought Transformation.

422.321.26 The Eighteen Pledges of Thought Transformation:

The term 'pledge' as used here is also used in tantra as the word 'samaya'. This is a Sanskrit word which literally means 'not going beyond'.

Headings with outline numbering are derived from the Text. Headings without outline numbering are derived from Geshe Doga's commentary.

© *Tara Institute*

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.

² Although this line is not found in the version included as Appendix 5 of *Liberation In The Palm Of Your Hand*, it is actually included in the Togme version of the text. Nevertheless, Pabongka does quote this on page 618 of *Liberation In The Palm Of Your Hand* and then goes on to give commentary to it.