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

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

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As indicated in the prayer of generating refuge and bodhicitta that you have just recited, try to generate the bodhicitta motivation, which is the true aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of benefiting others. It is with this motivation that one is listening to the teachings, and endeavouring to put them into practice.

We have been discussing the thought transformation pledges. Last time we discussed the line: *Purify whatever affliction is the worst.*

The next line is: *Give up all hope of reward.*

First of all we have to know what the aim is behind our practice of thought transformation. It is to achieve the state of complete enlightenment for the sake of all beings. Therefore we should not hope that through our practice we shall increase our wealth or name or fame in this lifetime. Also we should not think of practising thought transformation in the hope of obtaining a higher rebirth as a human or godly being in future, or to achieve self-liberation merely to benefit ourselves. Giving up all hope of future reward is to give up the result of merely benefiting oneself in this, or future lifetimes. The aim of the practice we do is to achieve the fully enlightened state for the sake of all beings.

The next line is: *Abandon poisonous food.*

Here food is being used as an analogy. If food is very good or healthy then it can nourish and strengthen our body. However if food is contaminated, then eating it can damage our health or even end our life.

When creating virtuous deeds we need to make sure our deeds are not influenced by the poisonous mind of self-cherishing. If our virtue is contaminated by self-cherishing, then it will be a hindrance or obstruction to achieving enlightenment. Ensure that whatever practice we do is motivated by bodhicitta or the mind of enlightenment, so that it can be a true cause to reach full enlightenment.

*Do not serve the central object leniently.*

According to lam rim commentary this line is saying that we should always try to break the continuum of delusions. If you do not apply the antidote when any delusion arises, the delusion will continue and become stronger and more forceful.

Another explanation of this line is that we should not harbour any resentment or grudge within us whenever we receive harm from others. If we show anger only at the time of receiving harm from another, and also afterwards hold anger inside with resentment, this prevents us from cultivating compassion. Therefore the advice is not to hold, or sustain the continuum of anger.

*Be indifferent to malicious jokes.*

Under this pledge or commitment there are four practices of virtue to remember:

1. When someone speaks to you harshly or rudely do not respond in similar fashion.
2. Do not respond to anger with anger.
3. Do not criticise or speak about the faults of others even when they do so about you.
4. If you receive a blow from another do not return it with two blows.

So these four are very important. Without practising them we cannot even imagine that we are practising Dharma. We need to take these four into account in our own daily actions. If we look into our daily actions when we received harm from anyone, whether they were countless beings or close to one, then did we retaliate with even worse than what they gave? When someone showed temper did we show more back? Checking like this we see how we react when we see some fault in others, or when others try to belittle us. It is so natural for us to react by pointing out their faults, or viewing them as having some fault. If our daily actions are always like this then there is no element of Dharma in our daily actions, and then our mind cannot be content and peaceful.

*Do not lie in ambush.*

This means that when someone harms us we refrain from hurting them at the time, thinking to ourselves that later on, when the right conditions arise, we shall pay them back. For instance if you get into dispute with someone, and at the time you don't engage in any fighting, but afterwards you think of paying back the person by stealing from them or whatever. This thought of paying back later causes us to sustain a bitter feeling, and because of this we lose patience and tolerance.

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So to make real progress in Dharma and to reap some benefit from it we need to take these virtuous practices very seriously. Practising only when we find the time can only benefit us for a short time, and is not very effective in bringing stability to our life, or bringing continuous progress with our spiritual practice.

*Never strike at the heart.*

This means to be fair with others in regard to common possessions or the property that you share. If belongings are common property, our attitude should be one of considering the other person before oneself. In other words it would be wrong if, instead of allowing others to have their share or use of the property, in an underhanded way we tried to keep it all for ourselves. If we have to distribute the property, rather than trying to give the worst part to the other person, we should think of giving the best or most to them.

The next line is: *Do not load an ox with the load of a dzo.*

The implication here is to refrain from blaming our own mistakes onto others.

There are various pieces of advice following from this line. They include not to inflicting harm upon the minds of human or non-human beings.

Also one should not deceive others by offering them immediate profit or victory, in order to secure some long-term profit for oneself.

The next lines of the text are:

*Do not be treacherous.*

*Do not bring a god down to a devil.*

The line 'Do not bring a god down to a devil' can be understood when we see people in the world worshipping some kind of god who, instead of protecting them, brings loss of life. It is as if their god has become a demon. If, instead of decreasing our mental delusions such as pride or jealousy, these deluded minds increase, then that is like turning a god into a devil.

The last line is: *Do not inflict misery for the sake of possessing happiness oneself.*

This means not hoping for happiness at the cost of the misery or suffering of any other being. It is wrong to view relatives' or friends' wealth and possessions as a source of security for one's own life, and to hope the friend or relative will soon pass away. It is also wrong to wish for your enemy to die soon, thinking that the end of the enemy's life is good for oneself. Likewise, it is wrong to want to takeover some high position held by another person, and then waiting for them to die. We should abandon this kind of attitude.

The seventh section outlines the 22 instructions of Thought Transformation, the first of which says: *Practice all your virtuous actions by one.*

Whatever practices one engages in should be motivated by the bodhicitta mind. Whatever actions we do we should try to do with bodhicitta mind, including going

to sleep, sleeping, taking a walk, drinking and so on.

This teaching concludes this year's Study Group. Let us try to dedicate all the merit that we have accumulated through meditating on compassion or bodhicitta. It is said that let alone the benefit of trying to cultivate bodhicitta, or just thinking of cultivating bodhicitta, even to recite the word bodhicitta accumulates enormous merit in the mind. As this is the last teaching for the year, try to generate a feeling of rejoicing for all the virtuous actions performed throughout the year and dedicate this to the flourishing of the Buddhadharma.

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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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*The original typescript is prepared from Alan Molloy's original transcript, which has been checked against Damien Busby's notes. Adair Bunnnett then edits the text, which is finally checked by Alan Molloy.*

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