

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅུངས།



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Ensure that your motivation in listening to, and studying these lam rim teachings is bodhicitta - the altruistic mind to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

422.321.27 Instructions On Thought Transformation (cont)

We continue with the section Instructions on Thought Transformation. The root text says:

Practise every suppression of interference by one.

This instruction must be put into practice when we face hindrances in our practice of Thought Transformation. Even if we have studied, and find ourselves with the right opportunity and facilities, we may still face hindrances and difficulties in beginning our practice; we may face sicknesses or we may feel very negative. We may even feel frustrated, because we think the practice in which we are engaging is ineffective or even counter-effective. Instead of decreasing delusion the practice [seems to] result in more delusion, and more disturbing thoughts and mental afflictions being present in our mind. It is also possible that we might feel uncertain as to whether we have enough financial facilities to support ourselves in order to continue with this [spiritual] practice. All these difficulties can arise when we engage in the practice.

In the lam rim text, *Liberation In The Palm Of The Hand* the instruction is that all these problems can be resolved by one means, which is the bodhicitta practice of Exchanging Self With Others. This instruction can also mean applying the meditation of Giving and Taking in order to encourage yourself to face these difficulties, through understanding that what you undergo is a worthy cause - what you undergo is not only for yourself, but to relieve all beings from suffering. Try to raise your awareness of all the pain and suffering experienced in the universe, and see how the problems and suffering you experience at present are not exclusive to yourself, but experienced by countless other sentient beings. By applying the Giving and Taking meditation try to understand that that the practice that you are doing is for the sake of all sentient beings. Try to adjust your view to see that the hindrances you are going through are positive and acceptable, and a cause for all other beings to be free of such problems, praying “May my practice be a cause for all other beings to be free of such problems”.

Why Is Our Mind So Distracted During Meditation?

As said before, if we do not interpret it properly, facing

problems in controlling the mind during meditation can be a cause of frustration, and can discourage one from continuing with meditation. It is important to understand why all these problems are more apparent within meditation rather than when you are not meditating.

We must look at how our state of mind in meditation is so different from our non-meditating mind. During meditation we are making a special effort to observe and control the mind. When we are not meditating (and not making this special effort to observe or control our mind), our mind is always preoccupied with some object of distraction. Along with our mind we also find ourselves indulging in this object of distraction. What overpowers and controls our mind in that indulgence is what we call mental delusion, or mental affliction, or just mental distraction.

We are somehow misled into believing that there is some purpose or satisfaction that we can experience, so we see that as something positive. Is it really positive? Is what we experience true satisfaction? If we investigate then we find that the basis of the satisfaction or pleasure in which we are indulging, is an external object of distraction dependant upon something outside of ourself. If we turn towards ourself, however, then we see that the satisfaction or pleasure we find is not within ourselves.

When we practise meditation we cut from our mind all the objects of distraction. When our mind is within ourself we find that there is nothing to excite or satisfy us, and give us pleasure. Rather you find something very disturbing. We find how we are controlled and overpowered by these mental delusions. So when we practise meditation there seems to be more delusion, and our mind is more distracted. It is said that in one way we can see this as a sign of progress, because we are now in a position where we can recognise these mental delusions.

Since we can now see the mental distraction and delusion very clearly, we can see how it drives us to external objects of pleasure that are only superficial and temporary. This reminds us that what we are seeking is inner peace and happiness, which is more lasting permanent and stabilising. If you realise this you can see that your own peace and happiness is something internal, from which flows a true sense of peace and happiness. Therefore try to recognise that this mental delusion and distraction occurring in meditation is the number one enemy of peace and happiness in your

whole life.

Delusion has always misled you. Realising this, you should try to generate the determination to recognise mental delusion as an enemy, rather than as a positive experience. Then you can challenge and defeat it.

The next line of the root text is:

There are two duties - at the beginning and at the end.

This is saying that in any virtuous action we undertake, there are two things to always remember: ensuring the correct motivation in the beginning and ensuring that we dedicate at the end.

The Difference Between Dedication And Prayer

Before we go any further, the distinction between the term 'dedication' and 'prayer' is that dedication requires some object or substantial cause to dedicate, whereas praying does not necessitate a specific cause.

At The Beginning

Let us say that we have cultivated the bodhicitta mind to begin our practice. What the bodhicitta motivation does is to explain the aim of our practice. The cause of our practice is to achieve full enlightenment for the sake of all living beings.

At The End

At the end of your practice it is important to dedicate the merit. This means that you direct your practice to the same intended cause you had in your mind at the beginning. So dedication is like sealing the merit that you have created in your practice. If you dedicate the merit, this can also multiply the merit created. So even if the virtue created is very small, by dedication it can become enormous.

Practice On A Daily Basis

It is important that we integrate this practice of bodhicitta mind on a daily basis. When we get up in the morning try to remember to motivate ourselves to engage in beneficial actions throughout the day. For the first thought in the morning try to pray "May the two types of bodhicitta always accompany my mind". During the day try to apply mindfulness and alertness with regard to the practice of bodhicitta, and try to remember how important it is to have the influence of bodhicitta mind presiding over your daily actions.

At the end of the day, on going to sleep, try to remember to review your actions of the day. Have they been in accord with the bodhicitta mind, or have your actions contradicted the bodhicitta mind? If your actions contradicted bodhicitta then do some purification practice. If some, or most of your actions were in accord with the bodhicitta motivation, then try to feel positive and to rejoice in those actions. Of course at the beginning applying these practices on a daily basis will be difficult because they are so different. However if we make some effort to integrate this practice, then eventually we shall become very familiar with it, and effortlessly remember to do it all the time.

We have covered teachings which give some idea on how bodhicitta practice can be integrated day-by-day, and how it can be integrated into one meditation session. Normally one meditation session has three parts - the

beginning, middle and end. In daily terms, the beginning is rising from bed, the middle is the actions we do during the day and the end is going to bed.

We said earlier how important it is that we begin the day with a positive mind, which means having bodhicitta mind. Then we can see what a difference this makes to our whole day, what we do and what we experience. In the same way our whole day will be spoiled and miserable if, right from the beginning when we arise from bed, our mind is preoccupied with some problem, or any kind of afflictive negative emotions. Then the mind is not clear and very distracted. If we examine we can see how it effects us. Likewise we can see how important it is to maintain some sense of mindfulness and alertness during the day, otherwise it is so easy to completely forget our practice, and to engage in various negative actions.

When we go to bed try to relax the mind by removing all distracting thoughts of daytime activities, then cultivate the bodhicitta mind. With this very calm and peaceful mind we can go to sleep without trouble. Then our whole time of sleep becomes a practice called the Yoga of Sleeping, with many benefits.

The important thing that can help us make progress with our practice, and make it easier to perform, is to practise by relaxing ourself mentally and physically, and not to rush it expecting a quick result. So practise according to the pace that suits you, and try to progress step by step. This is very important to remember in our practice.

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.