

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

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23 March 1999

Cultivate the bodhicitta motivation by aspiring to achieve full enlightenment in order to benefit all sentient beings, and with this motivation listen to the teaching, and think of putting it into practice.

## Instructions On Thought Transformation (cont)

The next line of verse seven of the root text is:

*Attain the three principal causes*

Although there are many favourable causes and conditions for practising Dharma there are three principal ones.

1. The first principal cause is having met the Mahayana guru or teacher. This does not need to be explained because without finding the right spiritual teacher or guide there is no-one to direct us to the path.
2. The second principal cause is having the right frame of mind. Having met the right spiritual teacher is not sufficient. This second condition states that from one's own side there should be a genuine interest and faith and respect in Dharma.
3. The third principal cause is having all basic material needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Our life depends upon this gross physical form or body, and sustaining this body depends upon basic material conditions. We may have found the first two conditions, but without the third then we are not in a position to practise Dharma.

If we possess these three conditions then we should think how fortunate we are, and try to make the best use of them by following Dharma practice. If we do not possess these conditions then try to think of integrating the Taking meditation: cultivate compassion for other beings, especially those who, like you, lack these conditions and out of compassion take upon yourself their misfortune.

The next line of the root text is:

*Meditate on the three undeclining attitudes*

1. The first of these is the undeclining attitude of faith and respect in the guru, which is particularly important in the Mahayana teachings, because the guru is the source for all of the Mahayana qualities.
2. The second undeclining attitude is a keen interest in the practice of Thought Transformation. This is important because Thought Transformation is regarded as the essence of Mahayana teaching and practice.
3. The third important attitude is undeclined

mindfulness and alertness in safeguarding all moral practices, vows and pledges that we have taken. This also refers to maintaining mindfulness and alertness in safeguarding even minor rules of moral ethics.

## Relating This To Friendship

The first undeclining attitude of faith and respect in the guru can also relate to our other spiritual friends. It can be a practice to develop more faith, respect and appreciation in our relationships with friends, especially our spiritual friends.

To do this we have to show a greater sense of care and consideration for our spiritual friends. In our manner of communication and all other such interactions, we should try to please them by speaking in a very right and pleasant manner, and provide them with all the help they need, even if it means material needs such as food and drink. We should also stop all actions which annoy them, and that bring unhappiness to their lives. This includes those actions listed in the Thought Transformation text, such as not exposing their faults. Rather, try to see spiritual friends as treasures, which need to be hidden away. Instead of seeking out and speaking about the faults in other people, we should train ourself to seek out and speak about the good qualities in our spiritual friends.

This practice not only benefits us in this and future lives, but it also benefits others because in speaking of their positive qualities, we are giving a testimonial to their lives. Then they will receive more trust and faith from others, which will help boost their image in the eyes of the world. It is similar to the way advertising works: promoting someone's qualities as exceptional, influences the view others have of that person. The whole point is our motivation of benefiting others, so that they can become more important and highly regarded.

The term “faith” means the feeling or trust that you cultivate when you see someone with many qualities or qualifications. When we see a person as having no good qualities, and only faults and weaknesses then we have no faith or trust in them. Whereas respect is the feeling of gratitude towards someone who you remember has shown great kindness and support.

In talking about the importance of not speaking of the faults of others we are talking about an essential part of our spiritual practice which can truly bring more peace and joy in our own mind, as well as the minds of many others. If we do not change this attitude of always

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looking down on others and seeing their faults, then we shall never see their good qualities. This is not only harmful to our relationship with them, but it also destroys our own good qualities. This attitude can also serve as the source of unending problems for us.

There are some people who always talk of others in terms of their faults. Directly they are talking about others, but indirectly this reflects their own problems and weaknesses. It is so important to learn to recognise the qualities of those close to us, rather than always seeing their faults.

We should not wonder why our spiritual practices are directed to pleasing others. The reason we please others is to please ourselves; we have to understand how pleasing others can be a source of more joy and happiness for ourselves. We must also realise that we cannot expect any other person to be perfect, any more than we can expect ourselves to be perfect. The question of how perfect someone is, and how many faults and qualities they have, depends to a large extent upon our own mind, and how we perceive that person. [We should follow] the example of the great Thought Transformation text master Geshe Langri Tangpa who had great admiration for all beings, even those full of faults. He could see even a tiny quality as a great and worthy thing to be respected.

We can benefit from this practice in mundane relationships in daily life by learning from each other, rather than finding faults in each other. We can try to learn not to speak about, or to criticise others for their faults, whilst at the same time being aware of not being influenced by their faults. What we should always try to recognise in them is not their faults but their good qualities, and on the basis of their good qualities try to build an image of that person. Then as Geshe Langri Tangpa says, even one tiny quality is enough for us to respect them, and see them as a great being.

If we put this into practice then there are tremendous benefits: all our relationships will be very meaningful. Even if a relationship is finished, if it has been meaningful then you will not feel as if you wasted your time. When it ends there may be no direct relationship, but indirectly there is a relationship in the sense that you feel gratitude to that person, who you feel has given you something. This is a way of viewing people from the point of view of the qualities that they have.

The next line of the root text is:

*Possess the three inseparables*

The three inseparables are the virtuous actions of body, speech and mind. What this is saying is to incorporate virtue into all our actions of our three doors all the time. Virtuous actions of body are actions such as prostrations and circumambulating; virtuous actions of speech are reciting mantras or prayers; virtuous actions of mind are cultivating love and compassion for others, and faith and refuge in holy objects, then at all times our three doors are engaged in virtuous actions. We should not be as we were in the past before meeting the Dharma when, if we had leisure time we became absent minded in our actions. We should think of the benefits and the

possibility of incorporating these virtuous actions (such as reciting mantras) all the time, to help us prevent idle worldly gossip, or to overcome pride. So at all times try to apply mindfulness and alertness so we are not forgetful of our spiritual practice. Damien Busby for example, recites mantras with his mala in one hand while driving.

Next week we have a teaching break for a Study Group Discussion Night. The written test will be on the following week. The compulsory question for the test is these two lines from the text:

“There are two duties - at the beginning and at the end.”  
“Endure whichever arises either good or bad.”

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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.