

Study Group - "Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand"

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅད་སྤྱོད་པ།



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Once again try to reinforce the bodhicitta mind you have just cultivated. Using that as your motivation, think that to achieve full enlightenment for the sake of all beings, not only do you study the lam rim teachings, but you are determined to put them into practice.

422.331.212.5 Unnecessary Application Of The Antidote

ཉེས་པ་ལྷུ་བ་གཉེན་པོ་མཛོན་བར་འདུ་བྱེད་པ།

We are up to the fifth fault, which is Unnecessary Application Of The Antidote. This fault arises particularly at the eighth level of meditative concentration, which is the result of the progress you have made through applying mindfulness and alertness. At this level you have managed to completely remove all the faults of mental sinking and excitement, your mind remains single-pointedly on the object, and your meditation goes very smoothly. Applying alertness and making an analysis of one's meditation impairs that meditation and becomes a fault.

Remedy

To prevent Unnecessary Application Of The Antidote, one has to cultivate the state of equanimity, which is a state allowing the meditative concentration to continue without the application of any remedy. Even though applying an antidote is not generally considered as a fault, it is described as a fault at this eighth stage. Why? Because it is unnecessary. Not only that, but applying such an antidote can interrupt one's meditative concentration. So it is necessary to develop a state of equanimity in meditation. This helps to allow the meditative concentration to proceed naturally, without any intervention.

Types of Equanimity

With regard to equanimity there are three forms:

1. Feeling equanimity
2. Immeasurable equanimity
3. Compositional equanimity

It is the third form of equanimity which is cultivated at the eighth level of a meditation, which does not have the faults of mental sinking or excitement. Of the two types of compositional equanimity there is equanimity with effort, and equanimity without effort. It is the latter one which one cultivates as the remedy.

In discussions about overcoming the fifth fault by applying this state of equanimity, the terms "loosening and relaxing" are mentioned. There might be confusion here with the use of the term "loosening" in the context of mental sinking and excitement. However, in this context

it is used to refer to the loosening, relaxing or suppressing of alertness, and not to [the loosening of] mindfulness, or to the mode of apprehension of the object of observation. As we mentioned earlier, at this stage of meditative concentration there is no fault of mental sinking or excitement, so loosening or relaxing refers specifically to the amount of effort devoted to alertness, rather than to alertness per se.

There is more detail about this in the commentary text, *Liberation In The Palm Of Your Hand*, including the use of the phrase "loosening without being distracted". This phrase stimulates a lot of discussion among the various scholars.

Geshe Doga also recommends that you read the section of the Mahamudra teachings concerning the achievement of calm abiding using one's mind as the object. There are many commentaries on the Mahamudra teachings available, including one by His Holiness the Dalai Lama¹. Some texts explain this topic of calm abiding in detail using specific words found in the instructions of the early meditators or mahasiddhas. The basis for understanding these calm abiding teachings is that at the eighth mental state there is no fault of mental sinking and excitement, and the meditation proceeds "without loosening" or "relaxing without being distracted". It is important to understand the right meaning of these words, otherwise you can be misled in your meditation practice.

Next year we shall continue further with Calm Abiding and Special Insight.

Why We Need To Contemplate And Meditate

In the sutra, the King of Concentration, the followers of Dharma are compared with a patient, the teachings with the medicine, and the teacher with the doctor. A patient who, having consulted the right doctor, and having received the right medicine, refuses to take the prescribed medicine will never recover from their illness. Likewise, the sutra says, if having listened to the teachings, you do not afterward relate what you have learnt to your mind, and follow that up with meditation practice to calm your mind, you cannot gain any benefit from the teachings.

It is indeed very fortunate to be able to have the opportunity not only to meet with the Dharma, but also to be able to study it, and have the opportunity to put it into practice. Having spent a great deal of time trying to

¹ Editor: "The Gelug/Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra" by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Translator Alexander Berzin, Publisher Snow 1997, Lion ISBN 1-55939-072-7

pursue the study of Dharma, we have to realise that the most important thing of all, as the Buddha said in this sutra, is to also follow up your learning with contemplation about what you have learnt, and then to meditate on whatever understanding you gain in your contemplations. You can only expect some positive result from your efforts in Dharma if you mix the word of Dharma with your mind and with your heart, and then make an effort to subdue your inner continuum. Then you can see some benefit.

It is important that we always see the Buddha's teachings as something which shows us the cause of the problems we have within ourself, and hence the remedy to those faults. In fact in the Tibetan language the Buddhist Scriptures are called *nang rig pa* which means the Collection Of Inside Scriptures. Whereas other non-Buddhist texts that do not refer to the inside are referred to as Outside Texts. The distinction between inside and outside is not meant to disparage other systems, but to illustrate that the Buddhist teachings show the remedy to, for instance, the view of self grasping which is within our ourself.

Our Good Fortune

We have to try to think how fortunate we have been to be able to have this opportunity to study the lam rim for a whole year. We can also think how fortunate we are in our current life situation, where we enjoy sound health of mind and body, and have met with the perfect teachings. Try to understand that this wonderful opportunity we have found now has enabled us to accrue enormous merit. At the same time remember that finding this opportunity has not occurred without the cause being created. Try to see that this excellent favourable situation now is the indication of the amount of merit and virtue that we have created in the past. Then to gain the same in the future think of making the best use of this opportunity, aspiring or wishing, or even just making a general prayer, that in the future we may find such a favourable situation again, and always have a connection with the Dharma - the teachings which help one to calm the mind.

We know that the essential practice of the Dharma is to always maintain the right frame of mind: to cultivate loving kindness, and compassion, and the good heart within one's mind. We should not misunderstand, and think that to take Dharma practice very seriously we have to give up our normal lifestyle, or even give up our job. We do not have to give up our job to practise Dharma, nor do we have to give up various activities of our life.

The practice of Dharma is all a matter of acting with the right motivation: it is the type of motivation behind our actions, rather than the action itself which is important. The ideal example of a Dharma practitioner is His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who is one of the busiest people in the world. One thing however is very clear: day in and day out he always thinks about how to benefit others, and how to bring peace and happiness to the world, and to the minds of other sentient beings. We should also try to think that if we cultivate, and try to develop our sense of love, care and compassion towards other beings, it is possible for any one of us to be like His

Holiness the Dalai Lama - a true Bodhisattva. We should try to understand how we can make progress in our Dharma spiritual practice, by always focussing on our mind, and particularly focus on trying to develop this love and compassion for other beings.

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

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