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

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅུང་སྟེ།



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If you have an understanding of bodhichitta, which is the altruistic mind of enlightenment, you should try to cultivate that mind as your motivation. Think, "We are studying Lam Rim in order to put it into practice, and the reason we practise Lam Rim is to attain the state of buddhahood in order to benefit all beings." Try to generate this motivation.

It is also important that those who preach dharma use bodhichitta mind as their motivation. If both the teacher and the listener of dharma have the same motivation then our practice will be very fruitful.

## 422.221.111.6: The Five View Delusions

As to the topic of the teachings, we have finished the first five of the delusions, which are called the five nonview delusions. The sixth delusion is called deluded view and it has five divisions ~ the five view delusions

### 422.221.111.61: View of the Transitory Collection

འཇིག་ལྟ།

Let us first find out why this first view is called the "view of the transitory collection". The usage of the term transitory collection identifies the basis or objects on which this view arises, which are the five aggregates (the aggregates of form, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors \*and consciousness). Because these five are subject to the law of momentary change they are "transitory", and because they are a group of five in number they are called a -collection". Therefore the transitory collection refers to the five aggregates. On the basis of this transitory collection the views of "I" and "mine" develop.

This is a general explanation as to why this first deluded view is called the view of the transitory collection. It does not necessarily imply that such a view must be based on all five aggregates. To be more inclusive it is more correct to say that this view of the transitory collection arises in relation to the aggregates, which are subject to the law of momentary change.

#### How the View of the Transitory Collection Arises

We need to identify this view of the transitory collection in terms of its object, its way of apprehending its object, and so forth.

This view refers to a sense of "I" and "mine" which is based on the wrong notion of the actual existence of reality - of the way "I" and "mine" actually exist. The time when this sense of "I" and "mine" becomes most apparent to us is when a friend highly admires you, or when they are happy with you, or when in an unhappy mood they belittle you, or

accuse you of something you

have not done. Under such circumstances turn your attention to how this "I" has been very delighted by being admired, or how the "I" is very cross about being belittled or accused, and feels a great hurt thinking "Why do I have to tolerate this? Why on earth did someone say this to me?"

If, while in this state of mind, you investigate how this "I" exists, what is very clear is that this "I" seems very concrete. It is so obvious and it arises right deep down inside. This "I" seems to have such an independent existence. It is as if the "I" is not dependent upon any other factors like the aggregates. The way the "I" appears to our mind at this stage is as if it exists inherently, existing by itself in its own right.

If we then grasp onto this "I" as existing inherently, then this grasping is what is known as the view of the transitory collection. It is a view which arises in relation to one's own aggregates. From this point of view, viewing the self or others as inherently existent is selfgrasping but is not the view of the transitory collection.<sup>1</sup>

It is said that due to this deluded view of self-grasping, we become very vulnerable. With praise or admiration it is easy to get excited, but if someone belittles you, then anger arises. Therefore the point of investigating this wrong, deluded view is to realise that it is the root cause of all the harm which we receive in our life.

As more explanation of this will come in later sections, we shall not do more now. What we have covered is just to give a vague understanding of it.

### 422.221.111.62: Extreme View

The second wrong view is extreme view. This is the view that the "I" or the self is either permanent in the sense of not changing, or that at the time of death just as the body will cease to exist so will the "I" cease to exist. Believing in either or both of these views is falling into the extreme view of either eternalism or nihilism.

### 422.221.111.63: View of Holding the Wrong View as the Supreme View

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<sup>1</sup> Editor: The grasping onto the view of the inherent existence of a self which is based upon one's own aggregates is the view of the transitory collection, but the grasping onto the view of the inherent existence of a self which is based upon the aggregates of another person is not the view of the transitory collection. This latter view (grasping onto the view of the inherent existence of a self based upon the aggregates of another person) is a grasping at the self of person but not the grasping of the view of the transitory collection.

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## ལྷན་མཚོན་པའི་དྲིན།

Holding the wrong view as supreme holds either of the above two views (the view of the transitory collection and extreme view) as supreme, or holding a person who adheres to those views as being supreme.

422.221.111.64: Holding Wrong Moral Ethics or Ascetic Practice as Supreme

The original text explains very clearly that this view refers to beliefs relating to self-inflicting, very ascetic practices; examples of which can be found in the text. These are not only inferior, but are also very misleading practices. This view also includes holding sonic evil or inferior moral practice as supreme. Examples of these are also found in the text.

422.221.111.65: Perverted View

## ལོན་ལྷན་པ།

This view refers mainly to denying the fact of the four noble truths, the karmic law of cause and effect, or the three objects of refuge.

It is said that of all the six root delusions, the one which is the source of all the others is the view of the transitory collection. The relationship of this delusion to the others is like the relationship of our sense faculty to all other parts of our body. The sense faculty pervades all parts of our body, just as the view of the transitory collection pervades all other delusions.

422.221.12: The Stages in which Delusions are Generated

## ཇི་ལྟར་སྐྱེ་བའི་རིམ་པ།

After the classification of the six root delusions, the stages in which the delusions are generated is the next heading in the text.

According to those schools of tenets which assert that ignorance and the view of the transitory collection are synonymous, [e.g. middle way school of Prasangika Madhyamika] they state that the root cause of all delusions and karma is ignorance [which is the same as the view of the transitory collection].

### Divisions of View of the Transitory Collection

This view of the transitory collection can be divided into two types:

1. The artificial or imputed view of the transitory collection; because this is the view which you adopt through the influence of studying an outsider's philosophical view or text it is called an imputed or artificial view.
2. The innate view of the transitory collection; this is the view of "I" and "mine" which has existed from the time of birth. It is always there. With respect to this innate view of the transitory collection there are two divisions:

- the innate view of "I"
- the innate view of "mine".

If we further examine these two in detail, the innate view of "I" serves as the cause of the innate view of mine

Investigating how the "I" exists when we have been

wrongly accused, blamed or highly admired, will yield different thoughts. On receiving praise you think "That was great wonderful and very true. It was what I deserved." Whereas with blame you think "What they said about me was incorrect." If while within this intense state of emotion you look at this "I", you see that it appears to be very independent, and seems to have an inherent existence. This is how the view of the transitory collection arises: it happens very naturally and involuntarily, and is innate. It is said that from this view of "I" all other views follow, and then all the other delusions, and consequent creations of karma arise.

So if we look back then, from this view or sense of "I" the sense of "mine" develops. Along with this there is also some feeling within that there is an "experiencer" or "possessor" or "owner". From that there is a sense of importance of the self, since there is some attachment to this self, and "mine". This attachment to self, to "I" and "mine" naturally stimulates other feelings of attachment to objects or people who are close, or of use to the self. To those objects that are distant to the self, there is hatred or ill-feeling. In this way we create various karmas as a result of our attachment or hatred.

It is good to know about this gradual, casual development of the various delusions beginning with the view of the transitory collection. Then we are more able to counteract these various delusions.

If we put this into practice, then we can directly derive benefit from this teaching. We can prevent unnecessary conflict in our relationships and causing problems to others and to our own life. With a mind which has more understanding, and with a broader view of things then our experience will be more relaxed and our approach to things will be more gentle. If in a relationship your friend says something nasty to you, or as soon as you notice some wrong-doing on the part of a friend, you feel "This is so inconsiderate. It must be stopped right now." Thinking in this very self-defensive way will intensify the view of "I". As this sense of "I" grows you will lose control, and lose your temper. Then, not only will you be emotionally unstable, but your facial expression will look aggressive, and be an unpleasant sight for everyone. So rushing to respond to a situation immediately means that there is a great potential for your relationship to be destroyed, with the loss of personal stability in life, and harm to others.

You may not have completely overcome this sense of "I" and "mine". However, whether you are right or wrong in unfavourable situations, try not to think in these negative, destructive and selfish ways, and instead try to calm yourself by thinking that this will go away and that maybe there will be a better time to discuss this issue, and then you will not lose your temper. And then you will not lose your inner peace and stability, nor will you create a further cause to make the situation worse.

So there is a lot to learn about our own experience even in terms of this view of the self, and how it is a direct cause of the negative attitudes and emotions which we generate and develop in ourselves.

If you look at this self when it is fully grown, such as when you totally lose self-control to the point where you see your close friend as completely wrong, then at this point your resentment is very strong. The self is not an abstract then: it seems so totally concrete and solid that we could grasp it with our hand. Of course there is no such self. When this

<sup>2</sup> For further clarification of this issue refer to Study Group notes 7 November 1995, discussion of Fourth Root Delusion - Ignorance

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sense of "I" becomes so strong, you can see how at this point no-one can stop you doing something very unskilful or destructive; no-one can help us change our view of seeing, even our closest friend as the worst enemy.

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27 March 1996

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Try to generate the bodhichitta motivation by thinking I shall attain the fully enlightened state of buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings, and it is for this ultimate goal that I am studying and practising the Lam Rim teachings."

## 422.221.12: The Stages in the Generation of Delusions

ཇི་ལྟར་སྐྱེ་བའི་རིམ་པ།

Last week we covered in our teachings the stages in the generation of delusions. The root of all delusions can be traced back to the view of the transitory collection. There are two types of this view of the transitory collection which are:

- the imputed or intellectual view and,
- the innate or instinctive view.

Of these two, the instinctive view of the transitory collection is the root cause. If we further examine this instinctive view of the transitory collection there are two types:

- the innate view of the transitory collection which is the sense of "I"
- the innate view of the transitory collection which is the sense of "mine".

Of these two, the root cause view is the innate view of the transitory collection which is the sense of "I".

We discussed in the teaching that the best time to identify this innate view of the transitory collection which is "I", occurs when you are highly praised by others with many beautiful words. When you are being admired and praised, if you look you can then experience this "I" very vividly and concretely. Then follows some attachment and grasping at this "I". Then due to this, you would also have the feeling of this <sup>1,111</sup> being a possessor, owner or user. So there is a strong attachment to the "I" which is then followed by hatred: by the thought of liking those who benefit you, but feeling dislike or animosity towards those who harm you. As these thoughts of attachment to one and hatred to another are generated, then naturally other delusions such as jealousy and competitiveness and so forth will arise.

## How The Root Of Samsara Operates In Our Lives

Under the influence of the various delusions which are generated, we then create various types of karma or actions which bind us to this cyclic existence. If we know the stages in which delusions are generated, and the resulting karma we create, then we also become very familiar with this idea of cause, and the effect of taking rebirth in cyclic existence. This idea also gives us some knowledge of how to free ourselves from cyclic existence.

When we investigate the source of cyclic existence, the root cause is the view of the transitory collection. That view automatically arouses all the other delusions, such as attachment, hatred, jealousy, or deluded doubt, which have a strong influence on our life. Take for instance the influence of attachment. When it dominates in our mind, it can be so strong that all our actions are driven by it. Because we are under the influence of this strong attachment we have no independence and self control, and we undertake unimaginable actions which may have the consequence of causing harm to both ourself and others. But even regardless of what the consequences of that karma will be, when we are under the influence of attachment we have no freedom or independence.

Similarly if we recall our experience of strong hatred, we can see that whatever we do under its influence totally lacks control and a clear sense of judgement. Under the influence of hatred we might make every effort to harm our nearest friend through any means possible: saying something unpleasant verbally, showing an unpleasant, ugly face, or even to suit our purpose, physically and violently abusing others.

Therefore if we think of the stages in the creation of negative actions which result in suffering, we can see that the main source of all these causes is our mind. This is why it is said in buddhism that mind, or karma, is the source of all happiness and suffering. So learning about the stages of development of delusions and karma based upon our own experience, begins with this view of the transitory collection. Because of this we generate various delusions and create various karmas, and when these delusions become very intense we engage in actions which we would normally never think of doing.

On the basis of this understanding of our own situation, we can then see the situation of others in the same way.

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Why do they behave in an abnormal way? What is the force behind their abnormal behaviour? It is also the delusions such as attachment and hatred. Due to these delusions they become very helpless, and it becomes natural for them to create very negative actions. And so this can help us to generate more compassion and tolerance to others who create negative actions towards us.

### **Why our Mind is so Important**

We must think over and over about our own mind because when we follow the spiritual path of dharma we are seeking the cause of happiness or unhappiness within, and not in the outside world. Why is our mind so important? The answer is that in reality it is our mind which rules over our life. It is like the owner of ourself. The mind is the one which never leaves us - day and night it keeps us company. It is said that whether our experience is something very positive or negative depends mainly upon the mind which is within. We must therefore understand that the key point of taking refuge in dharma, is realising the potential of the mind to bring real peace or happiness.

So when we experience any form of dissatisfaction, even for a single day, we have to investigate its cause. To overcome that negative, uncomfortable experience we must first know its cause, and to know the cause, we must turn the mind inwards, and investigate ourselves.

As we investigate the cause of sudden anger and feeling empty in the mind we realise that the true cause is within ourselves - in the form of delusion. If we can then remove that cause from our mind, then we shall feel eased, and enjoy a relaxed positive state of mind.

We all seek happiness and enjoyment so it is almost inevitable that we have to deal with the various delusions which we generate, especially those delusions which are very strong. And when dealing with delusions we must have the knowledge to recognise them very clearly. Take for example, desire. What can be negative about desire? It appears to be something which takes us to our goal, something which will satisfy our wish for happiness. However, on investigation, desire can never be fulfilled. After satisfying one desire it will never let us rest. It will never say, "Now you can rest." Likewise all the other delusions show no mercy to us.

Therefore it is important as part of our spiritual practice to always challenge the delusions, and to see that challenging of the delusions as the means of bringing happiness and peace to our life. For as long as these delusions are not challenged or reduced, there will never be peace and happiness in life. Even if we do find some peace and happiness it will only be short-lived, and not a true happiness. Investigation will show that there is no substance that justifies calling it happiness.

We have to first think that all the delusions rise first from ignorance which is this view of the transitory collection.

In order to eliminate all the delusions we have to remove

their root cause. What is the antidote to this root cause of all delusions - the view of the transitory collection? The antidote is the wisdom realising emptiness - the ultimate truth.

So we must generate this wisdom of emptiness, and this wisdom cannot be generated if our mind is filled with very obvious or gross forms of manifest delusions.

Our immediate concern then, is how to prevent these delusions manifesting in us in the immediate moment. So then we must ask "Are these delusions in our mind arising due to certain conditions, or are they not dependent upon any other conditions?" Of course we can see that they are dependent upon their immediate conditions, so therefore the next thing we study are these causes of delusions.

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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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ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅུངས།



2 April 1996

Try to establish the bodhicitta motivation, which is the genuine wish to attain buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings. It is in order to attain this wish for full enlightenment that we are studying and practising these teachings of the stages of the path.

## 422.221.13: The Causes of Delusions

ཉེན་མོངས་པའི་རྒྱ།

Having finished identifying delusions and the stages in which delusions are generated, we must now understand that these delusions are not without causes. In other words, delusions arise in the mind because of they meet with certain conditions.

As the delusions are dependent upon causes and conditions, then we can at least temporarily, if not permanently, avoid those delusions if we make an effort to avoid those causes and conditions.

The text lists six causes of delusions.

## 422.221.131: First Cause: Base (or Foundation)

ཉེན།

The first cause is literally 'the base'. This is the cause which serves as the foundation for any delusion to arise upon meeting with its conditions.

The base of the delusion refers to what we can call the seed of the delusions. Using the term 'seed' shows that it has the potential or latency to produce the delusions.

It can also be called the unmanifested delusion or the subconscious delusion. From this perspective we are referring to a delusion which is not yet manifested. However it is seated within us, and can manifest from even a very minor cause.

Therefore the base cause of delusion is like the seed of a disease which if not removed could, at any moment, result in some illness or pain, due to even a small cause. Unless we attack the seed of delusions there is always a chance for delusion to manifest in our mind.

The first cause of delusion serves as the base to produce and increase delusion, which is why it is called the base.

An example of the difference between manifest and unmanifest delusions is when you generate and feel anger towards someone you dislike. When that person is in your mind your anger is very apparent and obvious. But in the next moment a close friend turns up, and the mind changes its thoughts to the friend. At that moment the previous anger disappears, but this does not mean that it has been removed, because it is still seated in the subconscious mind. It can still arise, or manifest, later without any great cause. Because of this cause of base the delusions arise in the mind when certain conditions occur.

## 422.221.132: Second Cause: Object of Delusion

དམིགས་པའམ་ཡུལ།

The object of the delusion is also a cause of delusions. The object of delusions can be either;

- pleasant
- unpleasant
- neutral object.

Each of these three objects can stimulate attachment, hatred and ignorance respectively. The reason why delusion is generated when our mind rests on the objects is not totally because of these objects, but is mainly because of the base (i.e. the first cause, which is the seed or latency of delusions which exists inside us). Because the seeds or latencies of delusions have not been abandoned, the various objects in which the mind engages can stimulate delusions.

The fact that an outer object can be a cause for delusion to arise in our mind, is because we have not abandoned the seed of delusions. However we can still prevent delusions by avoiding their object, since the object is a contributory cause of delusions. It is the same as a seed being unable to ripen without the contributory causes of soil and water.

It is very worthwhile to avoid the objects of delusion, because for beginners it is not easy to abandon the seed of delusions. So avoiding or distancing ourselves from the object of delusions is a very effective method of lessening the force of delusion.

## Vasubhandu's Three Causes of Delusions

Vasubhandu said, "the conditions of delusions are three:

- not abandoning the seed
- becoming close to the object of delusion
- generating the misconception."

Although the Lam Rim mentions six causes of delusions Vasubhandu in *Treasury of Knowledge*, or *Abidharma*, said that there are only three. However all six causes of delusions are included in these three.

According to Vasubhandu the first cause of generating delusions is "not abandoning the seed". Because we have not got rid of the seed of delusion, we generate delusions in the mind when we meet other conditions.

"Being close to object of delusions" refers to the three types of objects: pleasant, unpleasant, and indifferent objects. Pleasant objects stimulate attachment. Unpleasant objects stimulate hatred and anger, and neutral objects increase ignorance in the mind.

Therefore the most effective practice which the beginner can perform is to avoid those objects, which are very forceful in generating any delusions. Such objects might

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be a person to whom you are very attached, about whom you feel very jealous or angry, or very proud or competitive.

Because the thought of that object is the immediate cause for generating delusion, then we shall be able to minimise that delusion if we could get rid of that object, by distancing ourselves from it. It is very effective and helpful for us to minimise the thought of that object, and it is something we can do in practice. In this way avoiding the object is an effective means of abandoning delusions.

Thirdly Vasubhandu says "Generating the misconceptions" is a cause of delusion. These misconceptions are a very important factor which feed all the delusions and allow them to grow. With the pleasant objects to which we have strong desire or attachment, the more we project our thought about why that object is so pleasant, useful, attractive and beautiful then the stronger this desire becomes. Then the attachment grows stronger. Whereas with an unpleasant object to which we have hostile feelings, we create a list of reasons about why we hate the object, and this increases the hatred.

We hear very often in the teachings that in order to change the mind we must observe it and its objects, and then try to direct the mind from one object to another. If we find that letting the mind go to the east brings troubles, then we try to direct the mind in a different direction. That practice is based on these teachings.

As part of our practice of eliminating or minimising delusions, we not only have to identify the type of delusion and its object we also have to be always very watchful of our thoughts. Through this watchfulness we then try to recognise what type of objects brings what type of delusion to our mind. When any delusion arises in our mind what does it do to us? What does it do to our life and daily experience? On the one hand, we must be very clear and sure of the fact that delusion, no matter what form it takes will ruin our life and bring harm; it will disturb our mental peace and happiness. On the other hand, we must know the causes of the delusions.

If we practise following the delusions in this way we shall have a genuine motivation to follow the practice since we know the reasons and benefits from that practice. Because we know the reasons and benefits we also know the methods to prevent delusions. One very effective method is to get rid of the object of delusion. Of course it is better to rid the object from your mind, and not to engage with that object mentally but if you cannot do that then close the sensory doors by not allowing the object to enter your sight for instance, or try to physically distance yourself from that object.

It is essential to see why we are doing this practice. The reason is not to cause problems for others, but only to calm one's own mind and challenge delusions. Delusions, no matter what form they take, are destructive to our life and to our experiences.

Ordinary beings see delusions as something positive. In worldly opinion, desire is something which is very positive. It is seen as necessary to achieve wealth, and as a source of pleasure. If you are attached to, say, a person, you will undergo great suffering and misery if that desire is not fulfilled. The only solution a worldly

person can perceive is to fulfil that desire. This is the opposite of what we say here, which is to be distant from that object. But for ordinary people being close to that person brings satisfaction, pleasure and fulfilment. Ordinary people justify even their attachment to friends and relatives, as being something without which they will have no happiness or pleasure in life. Such people also see having anger towards an enemy as important because the enemy must be defeated, and if they are not defeated you cannot be happy.

Therefore when we begin our spiritual practice, our view has to be very different from common views. On the spiritual path we look at the whole thing from a different perspective. We have to see that all the delusions from which we suffer endlessly in life are due to attachment, hatred, jealousy and so forth. Even attachment to a friend is a cause of bringing disturbance to our mind.

In Geshe Doga's own experience it is very clear that the more he distances himself from the town and the circle of friends and relatives, the more time there is for him to be by himself and to have peace and tranquillity within. For the last twenty two years he has been able to maintain the continuity of his daily practice with fewer interruptions, because he has been away from the inner circle of his relatives and friends. However he can feel that as he begins to hear news about his relatives from his nephew, who has arrived in Sera, it concerns him, which he knows also interferes with his practice.

From our own experience if we are to dedicate our life to our spiritual path to develop virtue in the mind and minimise all non-virtue, then it is an advantage to be distant from the objects which interfere with our practice.

In following the spiritual path we are gaining if we are able to free ourselves from the deception and the dominant power of delusions. From this perspective the brave person is the one who does not have to follow the influencing force of the delusions; who is trying to achieve freedom from being deceived or misled by delusion.

Even if we cannot remove the seed of delusion, we can apply some means of spiritual meditation, or spiritual practice which will prevent the delusion manifesting in our mind. In this way we can weaken the intensity of the delusions.

Next week is a teaching break due to discussions. The following week will be a written test. Geshe Doga encourages everyone to do the written test. According to the rules the written test is not compulsory, and exceptions are made for those who for personal reasons do not want to write the test. Instead they can use the time for meditation

In general the purpose of the written test is to encourage you to study and go over the text. It is a very important part of learning to have some discipline and do some study in your own time. Therefore Geshe Doga wishes to see everyone write the test. He fully understands people who do not want to do so. But most know how to write, and you have paper and pens. For Geshe Doga the test you present shows you have been doing study on the subject by yourself. So it is good if as many people as possible do this test.

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འདྲེན་ལམ་དེ་མ་རྣམས་གྲོལ་ལཱ་བཅུངས།



23 April 1996

Fully withdrawing your mind inward you should generate the mind of bodhicitta, which is thinking that the reason we study the stages of the path to enlightenment is to attain the state of Buddhahood, so as to be able to benefit all beings.

## 422.221.133: Third Cause of Delusions: Bad Company or Bad Friends

འདྲེན་ལམ་

Of the six causes of generating delusions we have finished the first two. We now discuss the third, bad company or bad friends.

This cause brings distraction into our mind, and what we shall learn here is not to be influenced by bad or evil friends.

You must choose friends who are suitable to the development of your virtue and all positive qualities. Whether you are a spiritual practitioner or not, you have to be very careful in making friends with others. For no matter who we accompany, he or she will have two aspects to their character in both their attitudes and deeds, a positive side and a negative side.

If, as a spiritual practitioner, we choose someone who has faith in dharma, who practises dharma, and who inspires us to develop wholesome qualities, then we can also develop many similar qualities through the influence of that friend.

Even if you are not practising any spiritual teachings it is important to know how to sustain your friendship with others. You should see that your friend has both negative and positive qualities. If you pick up some negative conduct from your friend then you will regret it later, as you do not want any negative factors in your life. The most important thing in maintaining a friendship is to always try to learn from the good sides of your friend, whilst as much as possible trying to maintain distance from the bad side. Then it does not matter who is your friend since you will not be totally influenced by them.

Padampa Sangay, the great Tibetan lama, said in his advice to the people of his region

"If you follow everything you see in the ill-friend then naturally you will acquire all negative aspects of that friend. So you should abandon such a friend.

If you follow a good friend then you will automatically acquire all the qualities of that friend. So always rely upon virtuous friends."

If you befriend an ill-friend, then from that friendship

you develop more negative qualities and non-virtues. Whereas accompanying a virtuous or good friend will inspire you to increase your positive qualities.

One of the major causes of generating delusions in our mind is the influence of other people over us. If we are not careful then through such influence we can lose all our good qualities of actions of body speech and mind. What we need to do, is to try not to be influenced with the deeds of an evil or ill-friend. If we do not follow the ill-conduct of others, then their actions cannot influence us.

If we think of ourselves, we see how quickly we become influenced by others, and respond to them in the same way. If someone frowns at us, and shows an angry face then we respond in the same way. With a close friend or in a family situation we do the same thing. If one partner becomes cross then the other cannot tolerate that, and also gets cross. It is the same between parents and children. Instead of trying to alleviate problems, and help those who are close to us to solve their problems, we bring more conflict and problems into their life.

We must understand that in reality nobody is perfect; there is no boyfriend or girlfriend, no parent and no child who never gets angry. If we live with a friend who has bad habits and is short tempered, it is so easy to respond in a similar way. Then we shall also develop a bad temper, and on meeting a very old friend they will say "You have changed." Maybe you were once very patient, but you are now ill-tempered. They might even know that the reason why you have changed is because of living with that ill-tempered friend. There are so many examples of how the outside world can influence you, and bring more problems into your mind, for example, by conditioning delusions in your mind so that they will arise more easily.

So it is important to investigate life events, and try to see what is wrong in those events, and the cause of those wrongs. What is wrong is our view of the cause of happiness, which we believe is to have more indulgence in life, such as reading<sup>1</sup> and gossiping. This stimulates desire and other delusions in our mind.

Happiness is seen as arising from doing all sorts of different things in life, which cost us time, effort and money. All these things, which are supposed to be the means to be happy in life, have become a source of confusion and unhappiness. As we grow older, we then realise that what we have done does not provide any

<sup>1</sup> Editor: This probably means reading material lacking any purpose or merit.



stability or clear direction at all.

Although the heading is “bad company” the cause which we are actually describing is the various objects which bring distraction in our mind, and are a source of generating delusions.

### **Choosing Friends**

In talking about friendship we have to consider the best attitude to adopt when finding a friend, and then the best way to maintain that friendship. This is important since whoever you choose as your friend will have some influence over your life.

Geshe-la always advises “Do not just look at their face. Look deeply into them.” If you are trying to establish a lifelong friend it is important to see that you share interests, as well as looking at their nature. Also look at their qualifications for making a living, because material conditions are very important to security and comfort of our life. Realistically those material conditions are not totally determined by the karma of past lives, but also on creating or meeting with those conditions in this life. So we must look at our friend’s capacity to earn a livelihood.

From your own side, just because you decide to live with someone in a close relationship does not mean that you will need to change your whole life, your whole view and all your interests. You do not know how long your friendship will last. It does not matter with whom we live or do not live, our life goes on. But what does matter is the worthy qualities we have already achieved in life, and those that we shall achieve in future. Therefore when meeting with a friend it is important that we safeguard those worthy qualities in our life, and see the friendship as a way of increasing those worthy qualities.

Whoever we meet as a friend will have a negative and a positive side. We should try not to be influenced by the negative sides, but try to emulate the positive ones. Then the outcome will be very fruitful for you, whether the relationship lasts for a whole lifetime or not.

One’s attitude in choosing a friend should not be like a dog who goes after any meat thrown at it.

If we maintain our friendships skilfully there are always benefits. On the other hand if you are not skilful it becomes a cause of more problems, both for yourself and others.

If we apply this to our practice then we can divide our friends into two: inner and the outer friends. The inner good friend refers to our own virtuous actions of body, speech and mind. This is a friend who we admire and will abide by us, and who can produce happiness in our life. The inner ill-friend refers to our non-virtuous actions of body, speech and mind. These actions are the enemies who destroy all the goodness, happiness, peace and virtue in life.

If we focus on outside friends, there are people who influence you in terms of increasing negative unskillful actions. Do not listen to such evil or ill-friends and instead avoid them. Whereas people who influence you to increase virtuous qualities of body, speech and mind, are good friends. We should see them as a source of inspiration to develop our virtuous qualities.

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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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### *Edit methodology*

*The initial transcript is prepared from Alan Molloy’s notes. These are checked with Damien Busby’s notes by Alan Molloy and any differences noted.*

*Adair Bunnnett then compares her notes against the typed transcript and prepares this edited version.*

*Edited version checked by Alan Molloy*

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