

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ཅུ་ལམ་རིམ་རྣམས་གྲོལ་ལག་བཅུངས།



24 November 1998

It is important that our motivation to study the Dharma is bodhicitta. Then the Dharma practice we do, such as listening to or giving the teachings, becomes the Mahayana Dharma.

422.321.25 The Measurement of Having Trained the Mind

སྒོ་འབྲུང་པའི་ཚད།

The next main heading is The Measurement Of Having Trained The Mind. Regarding this the root text says

"All Dharma collects into one intention".

'All Dharma' includes all the sutras or teachings given by Lord Buddha, as well as all the commentaries given about these teachings. The 'one intention' means that all these teachings have the same intention, which is to present the remedy to the self-grasping view, and the self-cherishing attitude. If we had to summarise the essence of the Buddhist teaching, it is the remedy to the mental delusions: all the teachings are based on remedying mental delusions.

The Buddhist Scriptures are also described as 'the studies of the mind which deal with inner knowledge'. We have to understand that when we put these teachings into practice, what we are doing is counteracting the mental delusions within ourselves.

Keeping in mind that the main purpose of all the Buddha's teachings, and the commentaries to those teachings by the later masters, is counteracting the mental delusions of sentient beings, one should try to examine and make an assessment of one's own spiritual practice, which might be listening to, studying, contemplating or meditating on the teachings. Whatever the practice, we do it to achieve the purpose of Buddha's teaching. As said in the lam rim, the teachings on mind training can be regarded as a scale to measure the qualities of one's actions of the three doors. If these actions of the three doors or spiritual practice, are in accord with the true purpose of the teachings, then they should be influenced less by mental delusion such as pride, jealousy and competitiveness. So we try to examine the performance of our spiritual practice or our actions, by comparing our current behaviour and state of mind with our actions and state of mind prior to meeting the Dharma teachings.

If we have a clear understanding of the purpose of all the teachings, we can see very clearly that if we minimise mental delusion by our practice, then this shows that we have trained our mind through these Dharma teachings. It also indicates that the teaching is benefiting us, since we can see that we have fewer mental delusions, and so we have more peace and happiness, and our mindstream

is more tamed.

As we study we can also understand that our progress in the practice of minimising delusions is only possible if we counteract both the self-grasping view, and the self-cherishing mind. Because if we challenge and diminish the influence of the self-grasping view, then naturally all mental delusion is minimised. So in terms of the root text the 'one essence' [or 'one intention'] of all the Buddha's teachings is to counteract the self-grasping view, and thereby counter all mental delusions.

We know that the way to measure the success of our spiritual practice is by the amount of self-grasping we find. If our self-grasping decreases, this indicates success and that we have trained the mind. If, however, the self-grasping view has not been reduced and weakened, then this indicates that the mind has not yet been trained.

The next line of the root text says

"Retain the two witnesses of foremost importance".

This line also concerns the measurement of the degree of having trained the mind. To measure this there are two types of witnesses - ourself and outer witnesses.

The best witness for our behaviour is ourself. We know best how we have behaved and practised. [We know when to feel ashamed and when] there is no need to feel ashamed. There are also outside witnesses to our behaviour.

It is said that it is best to be like the finest mango fruit, which is ripe both inwardly and outwardly. We are internally ripened if we have gained spiritual realisations and have fewer mental delusions. Then from our own side we are true spiritual practitioners. The genuine inner practice we do can show outer signs which other people can see. If you are truly good hearted and kind, then others see that you have these good qualities. In this case you are ripe both internally and externally. Then there is the case where one has not gained spiritual realisations yet may still appear as though one has. There may even be a pretence of living a life of pure morality, as if one is a very true and pure spiritual practitioner. It may even appear to others that one has some experience of transforming the mind. This is dishonest and not something you should do.¹ Even worse is when one possesses neither any worthy inner qualities, nor appears to others to have any positive qualities. In this case one is [like a mango that is] ripe neither internally nor externally.

It is said that we should try to be pure both outwardly and inwardly. If we are pure outwardly then we shall

¹ Editor: This is like a mango that is ripe on the outside but unripe on the inside.

not receive any complaints or unpleasantness from outside people. If we are pure inwardly, then we are enriched by many spiritual qualities.

What is most important, however, is that we are always able to judge ourself, based upon our understanding of the spiritual teachings. Then, as a person we shall become more honest, and our life more stable and self-sufficient. When we lack this ability to judge ourself and our own actions, we are easily influenced by outside conditions, such as what other people say to us. If they praise us then immediately we become happy. If, soon after, they say something negative then we become unhappy. If we leave it to these outer conditions to shape our life and judge our performance, then it is hard to make any progress or achieve any success, and hard to control our thoughts, feelings and emotions.

Whereas if we are our own witness to the actions we do, then if we are very honest we see what positive qualities and faults we have, and what good and wrong actions we do. If we are a true witness to our actions, then when someone comments that our behaviour is unsatisfactory in some way, we shall know whether or not it is true. If it is true, even if it is a criticism, then we can acknowledge and accept it. If it is not true, then there is no reason to get angry or feel unhappy, because we would know that it is not true. It is part of the bodhisattva's practice to have no attachment about either fame or reputation. Rather a bodhisattva who possesses a great wealth of knowledge and qualities is always very humble, showing great humility. We should always try to follow the way of life of a bodhisattva. In particular the focus here is upon one's own self, trying to correct one's own mistakes, while at the same time developing as many positive qualities as possible.

The next line of the root text says:

"One is always accompanied by only joyful thoughts"

This shows that you can always retain joy and happiness in the mind through this practice of mind training or Thought Transformation. The reason why people do not always enjoy happiness and a joyful mind is often due to their circumstances of living, and the conditions of their life. We can see that whether these conditions are favourable and good, or unfavourable and bad, people's minds can still be restless and unhappy. Many people are very restless, completely unhappy and deprived of peace as a result of worrying about their large amount of wealth and possessions. Although they are rich, they want to become even richer. They never stop worrying about how to secure their wealth, or how to increase it. So mentally there is no moment of joy. If you are not wealthy then you do not experience this, but there are very many wealthy people who say that they are imprisoned and controlled by their wealth, and that their life is miserable. Too much wealth can be a source of mental anguish.

If we are following spiritual practice we are supposed to renounce wealth and be detached from worldly possessions. However it is possible that even if you have no desire to accumulate wealth in life, you may still find that wealth will come to you, and you will become rich. If this happens you will not want to suffer as worldly people do. You can overcome this suffering caused by

wealth or by favourable external conditions by applying this Thought Transformation mind training.

Others undergo tremendous physical and mental suffering because of poverty. They do not find any rest or peace because they are so desperate in their search for wealth. If they also apply this teaching of mind training they can get a clear picture of their situation. Suppose that you have been making a tremendous effort to improve your situation but still there is no wealth. Why does nothing happen to reward your efforts? It can be seen in the light of karma - the law of cause and effect. Through this one can at least reduce frustration and inwardly be at peace to the same degree as someone who is wealthier.

When it says 'One is only accompanied by joyful thoughts', the implication is that whatever our conditions of living, whether favourable or not, we can still maintain a happy and peaceful state of mind by applying these teachings on thought transformation, because they have the potential to transform all conditions into the spiritual path. Whether they are good or bad, when these conditions are transformed they are no longer a cause of unhappiness. When we can see this, we appreciate the benefits of Thought Transformation.

As you consider more and more instances of how you can become easily happy or unhappy, such as the times when we become happy when we are praised, or unhappy when we are condemned, criticised and put down, we see that this is something which we can overcome through the mind training practice. Then we do not become particularly upset or displeased when someone criticises us, nor particularly pleased when praised. With mind training we achieve a very even and balanced attitude which can bring contentment and reduce the amount of desire in our mind.

In the next two lines the root text says:

"A reversed attitude indicates transformation.

One is trained if one is capable even when distracted."

Here the examples of an experienced and inexperienced rider are used. A skilled and experienced rider will not fall off the horse if their mind is distracted, or even if the horse suddenly moves or jumps. An inexperienced unskilful rider however, would fall off if they were not concentrating, or the horse suddenly jumped or moved. This is similar to the person whose mind is fully trained in Thought Transformation; they are always capable of practising the Dharma. Even if their mind is distracted, or not focused, a fully trained practitioner can show tolerance and patience to someone who is unpleasant, or using harsh speech towards them. Whereas someone who is following this Thought Transformation practice but who is not yet fully trained may easily become angry or disturbed if someone says or does something bad to them when their mind is not focused on Dharma. You can lose our temper easily in that situation. Then later on when you look back, you see that it was your own fault, and by applying some remedy you can avoid holding the residue of your anger or hatred towards that person. This shows how we can become fully stable in our practice in all circumstances if we master this Thought Transformation practice.

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ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅུངས།



1 December 1998

As usual [a reminder that] it is important to firstly cultivate the bodhicitta motivation by thinking that these lam rim teachings which we are receiving are to attain the fully enlightened state of buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings.

As to the commentary on the *Seven Point Thought Transformation* we are up to the fifth main heading, The Measurement [or Criteria] of Having Trained the Mind in Thought Transformation, which we began to discuss last week.

□

Line two of the fifth verse reads¹:

'A reversed attitude indicates a transformation'.

Since Thought Transformation teaches us to realise death and impermanence, a sense of true renunciation, and true bodhicitta within our mind, so the measurement or criterion of having fully trained the mind in Thought Transformation, is mainly one of gaining these three realisations.

How do we know whether we have gained these three realisations? The root text says that a 'reversed attitude indicates a transformation'. Realisation of death and impermanence means we have reversed our attitude of strong attachment and clinging to this life. The indication of true renunciation is reversing our attitude of strong attachment to the pleasures of samsara. Likewise the indication of having cultivated bodhicitta mind is when the strong self-cherishing attitude is reversed, or completely eliminated.

There is no need for further explanation as to why these three realisations are the main goal of our spiritual training: they correspond to the three scopes of the path. The realisation of death and impermanence is the main training for a person of small scope; cultivating renunciation is the main practice of a person of medium scope; and cultivating bodhicitta is the main practice of a person of great scope.

It is important to gain some understanding of how these three realisations incorporate all spiritual training, and why they are essential practices. It is said that if any spiritual practice we undertake is not aimed at overcoming one of these three attachments (ie to this life,

to samsara or to the self-cherishing attitude), then that practice does not reflect true Dharma practice. So a true spiritual practitioner must gain these three realisations. Cultivating these three realisations will even be of benefit to non-spiritual practitioners, in terms of gaining more peace and happiness in this life.

At a personal level we should try to recognise these three strong attachments (ie to this life, to samsara and to self-cherishing) within ourselves, and realise that unless we purify them, they are the main stains or obstructions to any progress in what we do. If your practice cannot break your strong attachment to this life, then what you do will not serve as a cause to bring a better future life, and it will not be a spiritual or Dharma practice. In this sense a strong attachment or concern for this life is a hindrance to achieving a better future life. Likewise with strong attachment to samsara and the pleasures of this transient worldly existence, you cannot achieve liberation from cyclic existence, and whatever you do will not serve as a cause to achieve liberation. So your attachment is an obstruction. Similarly the self-cherishing attitude is a stain or obstruction to achieving the highest enlightenment or state of buddhahood. So try to recognise how these three attachments are obstructions within our mindstream. Try also to recognize that we have the potential to cultivate the opposites of these three, which are the realisation of impermanence, renunciation and bodhicitta. So we have the potential to secure a better rebirth, or even to secure liberation from samsara or even to achieve the highest enlightenment or buddhahood.

What is important is to try to ensure that whatever spiritual practice we do falls within these three topics, and approach our practice with this understanding in mind. For example approach the small scope by taking refuge, or meditating on death and impermanence or thinking of karma or the law of cause and effect, with the aim of minimising attachment to this life through our practice. If we could reach this goal of minimising attachment to this life through this practice, then we shall find that we become a more relaxed and contented person.

Essentially we practise Dharma to make ourselves a better person, and to improve our mental attitude. The main obstacle to achieving this very wholesome and positive transformation in our mind is not external: we must recognise that it is an internal obstacle. If we clear away all internal obstacles we find that we are very less vulnerable to outer hindrances. On the other hand if our

¹ Editor: There are several versions of this text "The seven point thought transformation". The version Samdup Tsering, our translator, is using here is the version found in "Advice from a spiritual friend" by Wisdom Publications. In this translation this line is the second line of the fifth verse but in the Togme version, as used by Pabongka Rinpoche in "Liberation in the palm", this line is the fourth line. There are also many other differences in the versions of this text.

inner hindrances are not overcome or minimised, then even a very minor outer obstacle can become a very major one.

The commentary mentions five signs which indicate having been trained in Thought Transformation. These are called the Five Greatnesses.²

“You will have the five signs of great mastery”.

First Greatness: being a great ascetic

The person trained in Thought Transformation becomes one whose mind cannot easily be effected by any mental delusion; who has tremendous patience and tolerance for any mental or physical suffering or any harm received from others; who, when confronting any unfavourable conditions, will not be disturbed by any mental delusion, and who will exhibit great patience and tolerance.

Second Greatness: being a great bodhisattva

One who is fully trained in Thought Transformation is fully trained in the bodhicitta mind.

Third Greatness: being called a great practitioner of virtue

The practitioner of Thought Transformation will integrate all the virtuous actions such as the ten virtuous actions or the ten Mahayana virtuous deeds into all their actions. The ten deeds or ten acts of dharma sometimes refer to the ten perfections but here refers to the Ten Virtues or Ten Deeds Of Dharma

Maitreya’s text *Ornament for Clear Realisation* calls these ten deeds the Ten Dharma Deeds, whereas in Gyal Tsabje’s *Essence of Clear Explanation* they are described as the Ten Deeds Of Perfection. However, the Ten Dharma Deeds are generally described as they are listed in Lama Tsong Khapa’s commentary, and they are:

- 1 Copying or writing scriptures
- 2 Making offerings
- 3 Generosity
- 4 Listening to Dharma
- 5 Reading (or reciting) Dharma
- 6 Memorising the words of scriptures, or Dharma texts
- 7 Teaching Dharma
- 8 Reciting or using Dharma texts as a regular recitation
- 9 Thinking or contemplating the meaning of Dharma
- 10 Meditating on the meaning of Dharma

Fourth Greatness: being called a great holder of vinaya or moral ethics

A person trained in thought Transformation will refrain from even the smallest and most minor non-virtuous action.

Fifth Greatness: being called a great yogi

The fully trained Thought Transformation practitioner is engaged in the Mahayana path.

These Five Greatnesses are the five qualities which are possessed by one who has fully trained the mind in Thought Transformation.

422.321.26 The Eighteen Pledges of Thought Transformation:

The term ‘pledge’ as used here is also used in tantra as the word ‘samaya’. This is a Sanskrit word which literally means ‘not going beyond’.

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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² Although this line is not found in the version included as Appendix 5 of *Liberation In The Palm Of Your Hand*, it is actually included in the Togme version of the text. Nevertheless, Pabongka does quote this on page 618 of *Liberation In The Palm Of Your Hand* and then goes on to give commentary to it.

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8 December 1998

Try to cultivate the bodhicitta mind which is the aspiration to achieve full enlightenment to benefit all beings, and make sure that this bodhicitta mind is your motivation for listening to these teachings. Also generate the genuine intention to put these teachings into practice in order to achieve full enlightenment.

422.323.126 The Eighteen Pledges of Thought Transformation

སློའ་བྱུང་གི་དམ་ཚིག་ལ་བཅོ་བརྒྱད།

Concerning the commentary on *Seven Point Thought Transformation* we are up to the sixth section or theme, which is The Pledges Of Thought Transformation. It says in the root text:

1. *Always practise the three general points.*

First general point: Not going against the pledges of Thought Transformation.

In following this Thought Transformation practice you are following Mahayana practice which is a very profound and high practice. This does not mean regarding your Thought Transformation practice as superior to all the other practices, such as the practice of moral ethics: it is wrong to ignore all the other lower forms of practice. In fact we have to realise that it is only by maintaining all the other practices on the Mahayana path, that we can make progress on the Mahayana path with this profound Thought Transformation.

The ultimate spiritual goal of the Mahayana path is the state of complete enlightenment, which is the perfect state, free of all faults and possessing all excellent qualities. To reach that perfect state of enlightenment we have to both realise all the excellent qualities, and purify all faults. So we have to make an effort to remove every single fault, even the tiniest one, while making an effort to achieve even tiny qualities.

It is said in one sutra that one should not think it is acceptable to commit a minor negative action, considering it to be trivial. Similarly it is wrong to think that there is no point in creating very small virtues. After all, small misdeeds are like the spark which can produce a great fire, and virtuous actions, even very tiny ones, are like a drop of water, which when accumulated can fill a large container.

We have to understand that no spiritual practitioner is exempted from the need to avoid committing negative actions. There are no exceptions. We see some people who, regarding themselves as highly realised practitioners engaged in some high spiritual path, claim that they do not accrue negativities if they do not follow

the rules of morality, and that they can, for example, drink alcohol. Someone checked with Geshe-la if this was correct. Geshe-la replied, "I do not need to explain, you can check with your own eyes. If a person has been drinking, and is affected and drunk then it is not OK, but if they are not affected then it may be a sign of some spiritual feat."

The sign of us making progress in spiritual practice is applying ourselves at whatever level of practice we can do, and making progress. Having done well in that practice, then approach the next and practise that one, and in this way progress from lower to higher forms of practice.

In relation to our own practice and life, this Thought Transformation teaching involves transforming our ways of thinking, talking and doing things. It says that we should not think that some negative actions are so minor that they do not require restraint. For example, by using these Thought Transformation teachings to change our daily speech we can bring great benefit to our life, and to the lives of other beings. If however we do not pay attention to our speech it is very easy to speak abusively and harshly to others, and as a result of this we create misunderstanding, confusion and problems in our relationships. As a result we might in return receive very harsh speech from others. This might be so hurtful, and such a source of misery in our life that we cannot forgive it for many years. We might think our own speech is a joke, or for fun, but it might be harmful or malicious to the listener. Therefore there is more benefit if we try to apply more restraint to our speech, so that it is as gentle, courteous and as honest as possible.

The people with whom we [most often] interact with in our life are those closest to us, and if we do not control our speech then those people closest to us are on the receiving end of anything bad that we say. Therefore we receive the very direct and immediate consequences of our bad speech.

When your speech is harsh it can distort the point being put across in the mind of the listener, so that they receive the wrong impression, and will regard it as provocative. Therefore their reply will be unrelated to what you said, and likely to be harmful.

Geshe-la has said in the past that it is very important for parents to pay careful attention to what they say to their children. The parent's motivation might be to always teach and help their children. However if when the child is misbehaving, the parent says "You are a very naughty child!", the child will not understand the parent's

motivation, and will be hurt. So the child learns the power of speech. Then later the child will use speech to hurt their parents. This could occur in public, and cause embarrassment and cause other people to say "Your child lacks discipline". This is the effect that speech can have on people. So using Thought Transformation to transform even a small thing such as our speech has tremendous benefits.

Teaching children how to behave is a question of skill in communicating. If children misbehave, for example, there is no benefit in pointing at the child and saying "You are bad". Rather it is better to focus on their actions, and show them that the action is wrong. Then the children learn that the action is bad, and as they grow up they will remember what their parents taught them.

This way, the advice you give to children is very constructive, and like Buddha's word, something they will always remember. Even in our own life we can remember things taught by our parents to us.

Second general point: Your Thought Transformation practice should not become a pretext for you to do whatever you feel like doing.

This means, for example, thinking that you have been following Thought Transformation practices and, having overcome self-cherishing, you can now do whatever you want, even if it means harming humans or non-human beings or spirits, and becoming very erratic in your behaviour.

Third general point: Thought Transformation practices should be impartial.

It is not right that you only practise and show love, patience and tolerance to those close to you such as your friends, but not to your enemies. It is not right to only show respect to those people who are high, while abusing and disregarding those who are low. It is said that in your practice you should show love, tolerance, respect and compassion to all beings without any discrimination.

The root text next says:

2. *Change your attitude while remaining natural.*

This line explains how, if your mental attitude has been one of self-cherishing, then through these Thought Transformation teachings it must be changed into bodhicitta mind, or into renunciation, or into death impermanence awareness. In order for such a change to take place you need to make a continuous effort, whether it takes a day, a month, a year, or if necessary year after year. 'While remaining natural' means that despite [the fact that it takes an effort] to change your old attitude of self-cherishing to one of compassion and love to others, you should try to create actions of body and speech as if they are natural actions which flow from a mind of compassion and love.

3. *Speak not of the shortcomings of others.*

This advises us not to criticise, or point out faults in other beings. If someone is physically handicapped in some way you do not comment on it to that person, and in terms of spiritual downfalls, for instance if someone has transgressed their vows you do not point it out to them.

4. *Think not of what is seen in others.*

Even if you see faults in others, try to understand that

these faults that you see are not actually faults, but that you see the faults because of the impurity of your perceptions. So try to practise seeing other beings as perfect rather than having any faults.

Here we learn about the right way to see others, which is from the perspective of their positive qualities, rather than from the perspective of faults and weaknesses. Without this mental habit of focussing on qualities rather than faults, then when we get to know anyone closely we seem to always see them with many faults and weaknesses, even if that person is a completely enlightened buddha. If we are not careful we do not realise that the faults we see in others are just our mental projections. If we do not realise this then we shall start to criticise that person, [not just to ourselves] but to others. So because of our own mental projection we generate an extreme view of faults, which others in fact do not possess. Or we may say that they do not have certain qualities which they do in fact possess. So we generate this wrong view in our mind.

We know from our own experience that the moment we see a fault in a person we forget their good qualities. Seeing faults acts like a blind-fold to seeing good qualities. For example when you first meet a person you do not know their minds. Initially you see them as a wonderful person but later as you get to know them you see a fault, and then more faults, until your attitude towards that person changes. Looking for faults in others is not necessarily spiritually bad or negative, but in a worldly sense people do not like it. The true Dharma practice is to develop love, compassion, gentle speech, honesty and good social behaviour. In following the spiritual path we must develop these qualities.

Geshe Doga has noticed that outside there are people who do not claim to be followers of a religious practice, but they are very admirable in their way of talking. They are kind hearted, generous and tolerant in their way of living and doing things. As spiritual practitioners we should see such a person as an ideal example to follow.

5. *Purify first whichever affliction is heaviest.*

This is quite clear. The mental affliction or delusion which is the most intense or powerful is the one which we should counteract first. When it says 'heaviest mental affliction' we are talking about whichever mental affliction most deprives us of joy and happiness, and which serves as a cause of continuous unhappiness and misery in whatever we do such as walking, going, eating or drinking. When that delusion is present then you cannot feel happiness. In our spiritual practice this is the affliction which must be first overcome.

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15 December 1998

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.

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.

Headings with outline numbering are derived from the Text. Headings without outline numbering are derived from Geshe Doga's commentary.

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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