

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅུངས།



6 July 1999

Cultivate the bodhicitta motivation by thinking strongly about your desire to achieve complete enlightenment for the sake of all beings, and at the same time generate the strong intention to put into practice whatever you have learned in the lam rim teachings.

In daily life it is so important to personally cultivate a positive state of mind while, as much as possible getting rid of negative states of mind. If we turn our mind inward, we see that the most precious thing we have is the positive state of mind we have cultivated.

We can recognise these positive states of mind as precious for several reasons.

1. They are precious because they are rare.
2. They are rare because they are not easy to generate.
3. They are not easy to generate because:
 - our mind is not familiar with positive states of mind, and developing this familiarity requires effort
 - it is very rare to get any assistance from outside.

On the other hand negative states of mind:

1. [Are not precious or rare]
2. Can arise almost spontaneously
3. They require virtually no effort to generate from our own side because:
 - The negative mind is an habitual state of mind.
 - A negative mind is not only easier to generate because of internal factors but also externally there are more external causes to make this negative state of mind arise.

Understanding this shows us the preciousness of this positive state of mind. It also shows us why we must make a great deal of effort on a regular basis to have some success in producing this state of mind.

Meditation sessions begin with cultivating the proper motivation. Therefore when we engage in meditation we should not immediately direct our attention to the meditation object. Rather we should first establish the proper motivation by making some effort to transform the mind.

422.331.12 Perfection Of Morality (continued)

To continue with the lam rim teachings: of the three types of morality we have finished the first two which are the Morality Of Refraining From Non-Virtues and the Morality Of Gaining Virtuous Actions.

422.331.123 The Morality Of Helping Other Beings

སེམས་ཅན་གྱི་དོན་བྱེད་པའི་ཚུལ་ཁྲིམ།

The third [category of the Perfection Of Morality] is the Morality Of Helping Other Beings which we introduced in the last teaching. In the text there is a list of eleven ways in which we benefit other beings.

Sometimes when the teachings are translated from Tibetan into English there are some terms that cannot be directly translated word by word from the original language. In the English version the meaning is explained [as part of the translation] and there is no need to explain it further. [The eleven means are]

1. Helping those who toil, and those who suffer
2. Working for the sake of those blind to the right methods
3. Working for the sake of people by benefiting them
4. Working for the sake of those threatened by danger
5. Working for the sake of those afflicted with miseries
6. Working for the sake of the deserted
7. Working for the sake of the homeless
8. Working for the sake of those without like-minded people
9. Working for the sake of those on the right path
10. Working for the sake of those on the wrong path
11. Working for the sake of [all these people] through miracles

Of these eleven ways of benefiting others we are capable of putting the first ten into practice. The last one, working to benefit others through miracles, requires the power of miracles, which you do not have.

In short, any actions that we perform through our three doors of body, speech and mind out of the motivation of bodhicitta, serves as an action to benefit other beings. We do this by maintaining our vows of individual liberation or, if we do not possess these vows, by preventing any of the ten non-virtues, or performing any action associated with the six Perfections.

If we practise this morality, which mainly means preventing the cause of harm to any beings, then we shall have no difficulty in obtaining a better future rebirth in the human or godly realms. It is important to understand the benefit and importance of this practice of morality from our own side, and put it into practice regardless of views, thoughts or actions of others.

422.33.13 Perfection of Patience

བརོད་པ་ལ་སློབ་ཚུལ།

Patience is described as a state of mind which is not disturbed or influenced as a result of being harmed by others, or by experiencing suffering.

From this we can understand that we are exhibiting patience when our mind remains at peace and is not influenced when we are harmed by others, or when we experience any problems. Patience does not just mean not directly retaliating or responding to others. Normally we say someone is very tolerant if they do not reply to another who says very harmful words. In fact this may not necessarily be tolerance. They may not outwardly show it, but inwardly they might be boiling over with anger and hatred.

Practising patience emphasises the importance of the mind. You are practising patience if your mind remains calm, peaceful and undisturbed when someone speaks harshly to you, or when someone shows you a dark face or when someone does something to harm you or to bring unhappiness to your mind. If in these circumstances you are mentally undisturbed by that harm, then this is patience. From this point of view you can see the benefits of practising patience.

If we give some thought to its advantages then we can become encouraged to practise patience. H.H. the Dalai Lama is renowned throughout the world for his message and patience for enemies. His Holiness says, 'The practice of patience is the most effective means of solving problems.' It is also the most effective means of preserving inner peace and happiness. We need to understand that people who always practise patience and tolerance see more benefits in this practice than in reacting and retaliating.

We have to understand what the practice of patience means to us, especially in daily life. We should practice patience with those closest to us - our friends, parents relatives etc. These people are our objects of patience. Try to see that the time to practise patience is when they appear to be causing us problems, with abusive speech or harmful actions. We must consider our response. If we do not control ourselves, we may lose our temper and react to them with harsh speech or a harmful action. If that happens we become disturbed, and lose our mental peace and happiness. Not only that but we must also consider the outcome of those retaliatory actions. We need to think carefully about the best response in that situation. What is the most beneficial? It is obvious. The most beneficial is to practise patience and tolerance. This is no great surprise, and we realise why H.H. the Dalai Lama can even practise patience and tolerance towards enemies. We shall return to this topic later.

At a personal level we can see how, if we do not practise patience we then lose our inner peace and happiness. Without this we cannot even enjoy good food and drink or any of the other good outward conditions.

The opposite to patience, is anger, and when that occupies our mind, we can see how we lose our normal sense of judgement and discrimination. Shantideva said, 'Someone whose mind is controlled by anger cannot discriminate between what is beneficial or harmful for himself or herself'. So we can understand how our efforts to help someone who is under the influence of

anger are fruitless and futile. Here it is important to consider our own inner continuum and focus on the shortcomings of any anger that we possess, then learn about the benefits of patience, trying to develop our own practice of patience. To make progress in our spiritual practice we must focus on our own inner selves. We should try to stop directing our knowledge at others, in an attempt to improve them by talking of their problems of anger and short temper. It is not right to do this when you have the same problems yourself.

Try to understand that when we say patience is a very effective means of safeguarding mental peace and happiness we are referring to our own mental peace and happiness. Anger destroys that, and brings personal disturbance and instability.

The more we develop our understanding of the shortcomings of anger in the context of our own experiences, the more sympathetic we shall be to others who are experiencing it. From our own experience, we can understand that someone who is showing great anger to us is experiencing great suffering. Generally a normal person will feel compassion rather than anger if they see another person suffering. Whereas an ill-natured person who feels hatred will rejoice and be happy on seeing their suffering.

However in general if we truly recognise the suffering which other people undergo, then we shall feel sympathy. If that person is completely controlled by anger and harms us, then if we can understand their suffering, it becomes possible to feel sympathy for them.

It is also important to reflect on the difference between the person who has an angry nature, and the one who is tolerant and patient. If we had a choice which would we like to become: the one with strong anger or the one without the angry nature?

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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13 July 1999

Let us begin by cultivating the proper bodhicitta motivation, thinking "I am studying this lam rim teaching to attain the state of full enlightenment so as to benefit all living beings". Think also of putting this teaching into practice in order to achieve this aim.

Last week we defined patience as the state of mind which stays tolerant and indifferent, and which displays a non-retaliatory attitude towards the harm which you receive from others.

One of the factors which discourages us from practising patience, is that there are numerous reasons which make it difficult to succeed with this practice. For example, how can we always practise patience when there are such vast numbers of ill-natured people? To overcome this wrong way of thinking about patience we should recall this verse from Shantideva's text *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*:

"The number of ill-minded sentient beings is like space
So there is no way that you can pacify all beings.
However if one pacifies one's own angry mind,
It is equal to pacifying all these angry beings of ill-nature¹."

It is important that right from the beginning we understand why we practise patience. It is not to pacify all those other beings who cause us problems; it is impossible to pacify them all because there are so many. Rather our aim is to pacify our own mind and stop the anger there, and to understand that if you do so then you will [effectively] remove all the causes of anger.

It is important that we correct our view of the cause of the problems and disturbances which we experience. The real causes are not external ones. In situations where someone shows us an unhappy face, or says unpleasant abusive words, or in some way is not pleasing [or irritating] we generate anger about those external conditions, because we consider them as unwanted or undesirable.

Are all these external factors the direct source of our discomfort and dissatisfaction? When we investigate we can see that they are not. Rather than those external factors, it is mainly because anger and hatred have arisen

within our mind, and we have allowed this to occur because we have been unable to practise patience and tolerance.

In fact, instead of directing our hatred towards external conditions, we should direct it towards the hatred and anger which we generate in our own mind. We should try to see that anger as the enemy, in the sense that it is our own anger which causes us unhappiness. So it is important to understand that anger is the real source of our problems and unhappiness.

We should try also to see the consequences of this anger. For instance, the moment we allow anger to germinate, our mental attitude immediately changes to the extent that we begin to hate even close friends. Normally we are proud to have that person as our friend, but with anger we begin to hate them.

It is important to see how practising patience and overcoming anger can be of benefit in sustaining peace and happiness in the mind. If we fully understand the benefits of a practice we can be confident that it is worthwhile.

Furthermore it is important that we make some effort to pacify anger and to practise patience instead, because as Shantideva said in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*,

"There is no sinful action like hatred.
There is no endurance like patience²."

The Three Types Of Patience

There are three types of patience.

422.331.131 The Patience of Non-Retaliatio

གཞོན་བྱེད་ལ་ཇི་མི་སྣུམ་པའི་བཟོད་པ།

The first type of patience is non-retaliation. As we discussed in the last teaching, patience is a quality that we have to generate in our mind. Under what conditions should we generate this quality of patience? It is whenever we receive any form of harm from others, such as from our enemies. As we said in the last teaching, when conditions are very favourable then there is no real need to practise patience. Therefore, to say that you are practising patience in favourable situations means nothing. It is important to understand that the time to practise patience is in the context of disagreeable or adverse situations, such as when we receive harm from

¹ Chapter 5, Verse 12, which in the Library of Tibetan Works version reads,

Unruly beings are (as unlimited) as space
They cannot possibly be overcome,
But if I overcome thoughts of anger alone
This will be the equivalent of vanquishing all foes

² Chapter 6 Verse 2
There is no evil like hatred
And no fortitude like patience

others. If, in this situation our mind remains undisturbed, then that is the practice of patience.

In order to practise patience we need to have some understanding of the disadvantages of anger, and also of the advantages of patience. With this knowledge we can then internalise this practice of patience, [blending it with our mindstream].

If we are aware of all of the faults of anger we are better able to remain very vigilant about it. The most effective way of avoiding the downfall of anger is to try to make some effort to recall all the faults of anger while actually in the grip of anger. Think, "Of all the non-virtuous states of mind, anger is the worst one". Why? Because even one moment of anger can be a cause to lose all the merit accumulated over thousands of years, and that is just for the invisible aspect of anger.

Now let us consider the visible faults of anger. As it says in the text, if we can see our own face in a mirror when our mind is boiling with anger and hatred, then we seem quite frightful. It is exactly the same as when others show us strong anger. It is very unpleasant and you do not feel secure if it is very threatening, especially if there is a facial expression of violence or aggression. So Dharma is like a mirror by which we can understand ourselves better. It is good to experiment to see the difference between when we are in an angry mood, and when we are in a cheerful mood; you can obviously see the difference. The bottom line is that outwardly we look horrible with anger in our mind, and neither jewellery nor make-up can conceal that.

We can also think that with anger we cannot control ourselves, and we become very restless, finding little to comfort us. Lying in a comfortable bed we cannot go to sleep. We cannot enjoy tasty food or drink.

As human beings we have a good human nature, a creative side as well as this bad nature and destructive side. Anger encourages the bad nature, and influences us towards becoming very destructive and ill-natured humans. Not only does anger obscure our mind, but we lose our normal sense of judgement, and we forget many good things. For example, the moment we generate anger towards a particular person we forget all the good things which that person might have done for us. Influenced by anger we can cause problems to those such as our parents to whom we are very grateful. Of all the kindness and support we have received, our parents have given us the most, but influenced by anger we harm them.

In a way we are practising within our mental continuum. We must understand that anger is a negative side of our mind, whereas patience is a positive quality. Whether we call it Dharma practice or meditation or a practice to control one's mind, it is all about developing more positive qualities of mind, and as much as possible diminishing the negative ones. The outcome is that as we make gradual progress with our mind, we gradually diminish our anger and develop patience, and so transform ourselves from a very aggressive, ill-natured person into a more peace loving and gentle one.

Anger is a destructive force, which can destroy our virtues, so we have to take more precautions to not

generate it. In the texts it is said that if we (who have not yet entered on the Mahayana path) generate anger towards a bodhisattva (someone entered on the Mahayana path) then such anger destroys the merit accumulated over one thousand aeons. This means that the most skilful method is to transform our mind, viewing all other beings as perfect, pure beings. The reason we must train in cultivating this pure perception is because we can never be sure who is a bodhisattva and who is not. We cannot trust the way that other person appears to our mind. So therefore the advice is that we should cultivate this perception of all others as perfect because of the risk of generating anger towards a bodhisattva.

The text also specifies, however, that if a bodhisattva on a lower level of the Path of Accumulation shows anger towards a bodhisattva on the medium level of the Path of Accumulation, then the lower level bodhisattva loses the merit accumulated over one hundred aeons.

All these teachings are based on Shantideva's text, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*.

We can regard practising patience as a preparation before anger is actually generated. What we can do as preparation is to develop our knowledge of the practice of patience; we can develop our knowledge about dealing with situations with patience; and we can develop knowledge about the faults and disadvantages of anger. We have to try to consolidate this knowledge until our understanding merges into our mind. Without control, anger can lead to suicidal behaviour, and do much outer damage to our life. Think of practising patience to remedy anger, so that when we confront a situation, which upsets us, we can then try to develop the tolerance and strength to endure, and accept that situation.

We also have to consider how we should practise patience when anger is actually present in our mind. When this is the case, try to be aware of the presence of anger, and that if you are losing your self-control; be aware that somehow you must maintain your sense of responsibility, otherwise this anger will bring you more and more destruction.

After this, in Shantideva's text there is a verse, which is an instruction to inspire us to practise patience, especially when we are disheartened because we are overwhelmed by the vast number of causes of anger. We shall expound on this in the next teaching.

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20 July 1999

In cultivating the bodhicitta motivation we should generate a genuine wish to achieve complete enlightenment in order to benefit all beings, and at the same time develop the strong thought of putting these teachings into practice in order to achieve that bodhicitta goal of full enlightenment.

It is said that just remembering or thinking of this state of buddhahood or complete enlightenment purifies enormous negativities accumulated over thousands of aeons, and that it also leaves a seed in our mind to actually achieve buddhahood.

How To Avoid Being Discouraged About The Practice Of Patience

Last week we discussed how important it is to overcome anger before it arises, or at the time it arises, or when it has already arisen, in terms of the disadvantages to both others and ourselves.

Whenever we confront any adverse or unpleasant situation we lack enough courage or spirit to apply patience because we think, "How can I practise patience when there are so many causes that stimulate anger, and so many objects of anger to confront." Then we feel that we are not capable of continuously practising patience. To overcome this narrow way of thinking Shantideva said,

We cannot find enough leather
To cover the whole ground
So it is better to put the leather patch on the sole of
our shoes
Then it is like covering the entire ground.

What we understand from this analogy is if the whole ground is covered with prickles and we have to walk on it, we cannot find enough leather to cover up all of the ground. If, however, we cover only our feet then we are fully protected, and this is the same as covering the ground. Similarly, if in order to overcome the causes of dissatisfaction and anger, we always try to defeat outer enemies then we shall never be successful. Rather what we should do is to extinguish the anger in our own continuum. By doing this we [effectively] remove all our enemies.

Persevering with the practise of patience depends upon having knowledge of why we should practise it, and also of what happens if we do not practise it. We have to relate these teachings to our daily life, so that there is a real benefit from them. We need to fully understand that the teachings are meant to be practised, and that we cannot afford to allow anger and frustration to dominate

our mind whenever we face some adverse situation¹. Rather we must break out habit of passively accepting the presence of anger, and we can do this by actively practising patience. [It is just the same as not leaving our hand on something which is burning it; we would be regarded as stupid if we left our hand there, saying there was nothing we can do about it. Anger is like the flame, and we have the same obligation to keep away from it as we do in not allowing ourselves to be burnt.]

It is also important to understand that even if we find this practice difficult, or we cannot practise it in all situations, we can at least make a continuous effort to try to practise patience whenever we confront adverse situations - then over a period of time we can make gradual progress. Apart from the benefits of this practice for future lives, the practice of patience can change our life and our relationships with other people in this present life.

The Relationship Between Patience And Love And Compassion

The practice of patience is a very effective one, and to practise it we must look at situations in a different way - from the perspective of the needs of the other person. From this point of view, the practice of patience is a means of cultivating true compassion and love for all those people with whom we have some form of close relationship, such as partners or relatives. Without the practice of patience we cannot truly share our love and compassion with others. Therefore as said earlier, we have to think of this teaching in terms of our practice, and in terms of how we can cultivate a more positive mental attitude to others.

We all have some form of compassion and love for people who are close to us, but is it genuine love and compassion? If we examine it closely we find that we have love for a person because of a selfish interest, or a selfish reason or a selfish thought. So what we feel is not true and genuine love and compassion. As we have studied, with genuine compassion our mind has a true understanding of the likes and dislikes of the other person. The indication of our compassion is a strong sense of responsibility to remove any unhappiness they feel. Since this is the true meaning of genuine compassion, we can see how this practice of patience is so [strongly] linked to the practice of compassion. Without the practice of patience such compassion cannot

¹ Editor: The meaning of the transcript for this paragraph was clarified with the translator, and this is the result.

be sustained; without the practice of patience we do not consider their situation, so we cannot tolerate even minor ways in which we receive harm from them, and then we become angry with them.

The Benefits of Practising Patience And Overcoming Anger

In regard to the benefits of practising patience and overcoming anger Shantideva said in *A Guide to The Bodhisattva's Way of Life*,

With a very diligent mind if you eradicate anger then you find happiness in this life and in the other life.

As Lama Tsong Khapa said,

With the practice of patience inner happiness will never degenerate. The result of this is happiness in this life and all lives; you can prevent bad future rebirth, and attain higher rebirth and the state of liberation.

The practice of patience is the source of all mental peace and happiness. It is important for us to realise that although learning about the practice of patience will implant a seed in the mind, without practising patience now you will not see the direct result of your practice in this lifetime. If we do not practise patience, our mind will be influenced by the anger we generate, and for as long as that anger remains in our mind we shall lack peace and happiness. If anger remains in our mind for an hour we must put up with the lack of mental peace for an hour; if it lasts for a whole day, there will be no peace for the whole day. If we do not gain much from our practice despite our study and training, it is because we are not practising enough.

We should not think that Dharma focuses only on the benefits in future lives, and that it has no place in this life. The reason why the teachings emphasise the benefits in future lives is because the benefits of Dharma in this life are so apparent, and need no explanation. We have to understand that if we put it into practice there is no doubt about the benefits of Dharma in this life.

Why We Should Not Direct Anger At The Cause Of Harm

The next topic is the reason why we should not direct anger at the cause of any harm to us, whether it is a person or an object. This is explained in the commentary text by means of the example of when someone hits us on the head with a stick, causing us injury and pain. Why do we direct our anger to the person who hits us? Here the text asks, why if it is the direct cause of pain, do we not feel anger towards the stick? The reason is that we know the stick does not harm us of its own volition, but that it is the person who wields the stick who is motivated to hurt you. They do not act like this by themselves, rather they do so [under the direction] of the delusions in their mind. So just as we do not direct our anger to the stick, similarly we cannot [reasonably] direct our anger at the person. [Rather we should direct our anger to the real enemy – the delusions in their mind].

We should try to realise that when any person acts aggressively or harmfully, it is because they lack self-control. Try to imagine yourself in that same situation, when you are under the strong influence of mental

delusion, and you are very unstable with no inner peace and happiness. Here we must think of the true situation of the other person, which is that they are controlled by their mental delusions to the point that they are deprived of peace and happiness and self-control. We can understand this from our own experience of being under the control of mental delusions.

This way of understanding patience paves the way to developing true sympathy, love and understanding for others, because it relates their situation [to our own experience].

Patience And Karma

We should also try to think of practising patience by understanding our own involvement in the cause of the situation. The reason we usually receive harm from another is because probably we have harmed them, or done some wrong to them. We should realise that the root cause of receiving harm from others is the cause and effect of our own karma. We receive harm from others because in the past we have harmed them, and the harm which you now receive is an indication of the ripening of the result of our own harmful actions in the past. If we acknowledge the consequences of our own past harmful actions it is the same as when we cut our hand, and yet we do not become angry at our hand. So understanding that the cause of our harm is our own past harmful actions gives us more encouragement to practise patience.

We have just related the practice of patience to our knowledge of the law of karma, and this is [another] example of how we can integrate one teaching with another.

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27 July 1999

Try to cultivate the bodhicitta motivation generating the thought, " I shall attain the state of buddhahood to benefit all sentient beings, and put these teachings into practice to achieve that goal."

Patience and Karma (cont)

We have been discussing the patience of being indifferent to any harm inflicted by others. One technique to help us to put this into practice is to understand the law of karma.

It is said in the text that the Buddha understands deluded beings, and said never to show any hatred towards them. This refers to any living being whose mental continuum is overpowered by mental delusion, as a result of which they are driven to commit negative actions, with the consequence that their the inner continuum becomes very unruly and negative. Therefore these beings are not suitable objects of hatred. This is saying that understanding the destructive potential of delusions to those who are possessed by them prevents any feelings of hatred.

To further clarify this there are the two examples of the patient and the child who become insane. If a doctor tries to give him medicine, the patient might try to harm the doctor, and the child may also try to harm its father. In such a situation the doctor would not become angry but would continue their effort to help the patient, trying to get to the cause of the problem. Likewise the father would not hold any resentment or hatred towards the child, but would feel very sympathetic and try to do whatever is necessary to help his child.

We should adopt the same attitude of making an effort to think how we can help those who cause us harm, and try to overcome their mental delusions. When other beings cause us harm we should try to adopt the same attitude, and respond as the doctor does to the patient.

When we receive harm from others there is always the moment where we could lose our emotional control. If, in that circumstance we generate anger or hatred and so lose our mental peace and happiness, or even worse if we hold a grudge or resentment, then we know how very painful that experience is. So we have to try to think what we can do to maintain our own inner peace and happiness when we face such circumstances.

It is said in the teachings that in situations where others cause us harm, the mental attitude which will best help us to sustain our inner peace and happiness is the mind which desires to help them. It is important to develop our understanding of this through practice and experience, rather than just learning about it.

We learn how mental delusion can drive people completely insane, making them undertake negative destructive actions, which in a normal situation they could not even imagine. It is important to personalise this teaching by thinking of the times when we have experienced these delusions of anger, and then think of the effect of those delusions on our mental attitude and judgement, and of the kind of actions they made us do. The power of mental delusions is such that one has no control, and the resulting actions can be very harmful not only to others, but also to oneself. In the same way we also now understand how others experience such mental delusion. Just as we have experienced, their mind is overpowered and completely controlled by mental delusion. We see how they are helpless and have no other choice but to commit those actions - even if those actions are very harmful to you.

By thinking in this way it is possible that we can cultivate love and compassion instead of hatred. This understanding helps us to overcome and prevent anger and hatred from arising in response to their harmful actions towards us. If we apply the practice of patience, there is the benefit of sustaining one's own inner peace and happiness, as well as transforming a situation, which is normally unpleasant into a cause to generate and develop love and compassion. Thinking like this means that you achieve the result of controlling and subduing your mind. So this situation has given you an opportunity to practise Dharma. By practising patience you have diminished delusion, and a true Dharma practice is one which diminishes delusion or increases love and compassion.

Basically the reason why we study and practise the spiritual Dharma is to create the right causes to bring about mental peace and happiness and to remove the cause of the suffering and pain we experience in our mind. There is no need to mention how important it is to have some sense of peace and happiness within our mind. Without it any action we undertake, whether it be meditation or some other mundane activity, will be very difficult. It will be difficult to find enjoyment even in eating and drinking.

Achieving mental happiness is very important for any being to live a happy life. Finding the right means of reducing the mental suffering, unhappiness and problems we undergo in life is in fact a very important issue. In our materially very well developed country, we see how that mental suffering which people go through in this life has not been reduced by material progress.

The spiritual teaching is about understanding the true

cause of suffering, confusion and problems, especially the suffering within our mind. In many ways we can learn just by observing other people. There are so many people with these problems in their mind. If you examine the cause of their problems, then you can see the main cause always relates to some form of mental delusion.

Here we are talking about the delusion of anger. We can see how other people suffer and go through a lot of confusion and hardships because they hold anger and hatred in their mind. They are unhappy and suffer just because they are not able to overcome this anger, even though they may possess all other suitable conditions. Someone who holds anger and hatred for a long period can be a very restless person; for them it is very strange to have even a moment of rest. So it is important to use real-life situations, and look at the people you know to see the shortcomings of the anger and hatred in their life.

We have to apply what we have learned from other people to our own life. We have observed the pain and suffering being experienced by others, and we could also end up in the same situation. You may have difficulty in overcoming a mental delusion such as anger. If you take no action to control and reduce it, then it is possible that in future due to some condition, anger or hatred may arise within your mind. You might hold it there for a long time, and then find your life is miserable, because it is extremely difficult for you to get rid of that anger.

It is important to have some sense of responsibility with respect to how to reduce the causes of mental confusion and unhappiness for oneself. When we talk about mental unhappiness or suffering, we have to understand that if we do not do something about it ourselves then there is little chance of getting any help from outside to solve our mental problems. Forget about help from strangers, there is hardly any hope of getting it from those close to us.

So we must always maintain our motivation to apply the practice of patience and not allow anger to completely take over our mind. Even if we cannot apply patience in every given situation we can at least not be forgetful of both the benefits of practising patience and the shortcomings of anger. With a little bit of effort remembering this helps to control anger and stop it igniting. By being consistent and putting a little bit of effort into our practice of patience, we can at least not become a victim of anger for the rest of our life. For a long period of time, for just an hour or perhaps a day we do not have to suffer from anger as we see other people do. So apply the practice to diminish mental delusion which you know is the source of this suffering.

It is important that we think about both the benefits of practising patience and the shortcomings of anger now, so that when we face anger in some situation, we can apply the practice of patience. If we are not used to it, or lack the knowledge then it is not easy to think about applying it [at that moment when anger arises].

When we receive any harm from others, such as abusive words or even physical harm, then one way of thinking is that this amount of harm we receive is very small compared to the amount of harm received as a result of one's karmic actions of harmfulness towards other

beings. We have to think, as Shantideva said in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*,

If you cannot even tolerate this suffering,
How can you tolerate the suffering or pain
Which would ripen on you
As a result of your harmful actions towards other
beings.

In most situations we receive verbal harm rather than physical injury, but whatever the cause of harm we feel hurt. Since we do not want this we lose our temper and normally we begin to feel hatred towards the person who caused us that harm. We feel that our anger is natural, and that the best response is to return that harm. Somehow that seems to be the only way to view the situation.

The result of our retaliatory harmful act however, is to take rebirth in the lower realms, with the result that we bring the suffering of the lower realms upon ourselves. When we think like that we see that it is worthwhile to tolerate the amount of harm we receive from others, because we see that the immediate suffering is very small, compared to the alternative future suffering result. For example, looking at the animal realm we can not imagine ourselves experiencing a large amount of suffering of that lower realm. So tolerating a smaller harm has greater personal benefit in the long term. This way of thinking helps us to prevent anger and to remember to practise patience. If one is able to use the harm received from others in any given adverse situation as an opportunity to practise patience, then that adverse situation becomes a very favourable situation for ourselves.

Of course this whole teaching should not be a cause of misunderstanding of Buddhist teaching as something where you always have to take the loss upon yourself, and allow others to exploit, manipulate or torture you. It is not like that at all. When we understand the teaching very precisely and completely, then the practice you do, and the reason why you do it with great enthusiasm and delight, is because you see great profit. You have to work hard and make some sacrifice in the present but in the long term you see great benefit for yourself. So as spiritual practitioners you are not just doing the practice for others, but also for yourself, as there is no better way of gaining personal benefit. Geshe Doga has often mentioned in the past that those who educate themselves see the benefit in the long term, so that when they are young they apply themselves to their study, sacrificing their leisure time for that study. Others do not see the long-term benefit but see only the immediate time frame as being more important, and they do not work for long term goals. Then in the future they regret not having any qualifications and so forth.

Next week the compulsory question for the discussion night is based on the verse from the *Eight Verses of Thought Transformation*,

When others out of jealousy
Treat me badly with abuse, insults and the like,
I shall accept their hard words
And offer the victory to others.

TARA INSTITUTE

STUDY GROUP DISCUSSION NIGHT - 3 August 1999

The Six Perfections

1. List the three types of generosity and give a brief description of each.
2. Describe the wrong views that one should avoid, in order to make ones practice of giving more fruitful.
3. What is the meaning of morality and what actions must be abandoned in the practice of morality?
4. Describe the three types of morality and who is benefited by each.
5. What is the meaning of patience?
6. What are the advantages of practising patience?
7. How do we overcome the overwhelming feeling that there are too many external causes of anger for us to be able to practise patience?
8. How does the Law of Karma apply in the practice of patience?
9. How can our understanding of delusions help us to practise patience?
10. How can we try to control the spontaneous arising of anger in our practice of patience?
11. What does Shantideva mean when he says: 'If you cannot tolerate the pain of minor harm from others then how can you tolerate the suffering you will experience as a result of your harmful actions towards others'?
12. Compulsory Question

Discuss the meaning of the following verse from the Eight Verse Thought Transformation text:

'When others out of jealousy,
Treat me badly with abuse, insults and the like,
I shall accept their hard words
And offer the other the victory.'

YOU ARE IN GROUP A

TARA INSTITUTE

(Study Group Test)

10th Aug, 1999

Answer any four from question no. 1-6

Question no.7 is compulsory

Time allowed one hour

1. List the three types of generosity and give a brief description of each.
2. Define morality. What are three types of morality?
3. What is the meaning of patience?
4. How can our understanding of delusions help us to practise patience?
5. What does the practice of morality mean to us?
6. What does Shantideva mean when he says: "If you cannot tolerate the pain of minor harm from others then how can you tolerate the suffering you will experience as a result of your harmful actions towards others'?"
7. (Compulsory)

Discuss the meaning of the following verse from the Eight Verse Thought Transformation text:

When others out of jealousy,
Treat me badly with abuse, insult and the like,
I shall accept their hard words
And offer the other the victory.