

# 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།



19 August 1997

Make sure that you have a bodhicitta motivation, which is the thought that I must achieve bodhicitta to benefit all beings, and that it is for this reason that I am listening to these teachings on the stages of the path to enlightenment.

There are three main obstacles to generating bodhicitta. They are:

- Attachment or mental attraction to this life
- Clinging to the pleasures of the cyclic existence
- Desiring peace but only on a personal level

The appropriate meditations to counteract these obstacles are:

- for the first obstacle, meditating on death and impermanence
- for the second obstacle, developing renunciation by contemplating the suffering nature of cyclic existence
- for the third obstacle meditating to cultivate even the seed of bodhicitta, for instance producing a very artificial or fabricated bodhicitta, let alone cultivating actual bodhicitta

## 422.321.1 Generating Bodhicitta by Seven-Fold Cause and Effect

རྒྱ་འབྲས་མཉམ་དཀག་བདུན་གྱི་སྒོ་ནས་སྲོ་སྤྱད་པ།

We are now at the topic of how to generate bodhicitta using the instruction on the seven-fold cause and effect. In the seven-fold cause and effect method, the first six are causes and the seventh is the resulting effect of bodhicitta.

The order of the seven-fold cause and effect - from firstly recognising all beings as one's mother, through to bodhicitta - shows how the causes and effect are linked. We can see this linkage clearly by contemplating the seven-fold cause and effect in reverse order.

Bodhicitta is a genuine and spontaneous aspiration to attain full enlightenment for the sake of all beings. Such bodhicitta cannot be produced without having cultivated the thought of superior intention, which is taking personal responsibility for the suffering of all beings.

In order to cultivate this superior intention, one must cultivate great compassion by completely understanding the suffering of all other beings. In other words such great compassion depends upon having loving kindness towards all beings. If we are generating bodhicitta through this method of seven-fold cause and effect, then in order to cultivate this loving kindness we have to cultivate the first three causes.

Why are these first three causes so necessary? If we look into our own mental attitudes, then we see that we do not have this loving kindness towards all beings. We do however, have this loving kindness towards those who are close to us. Therefore in order to cultivate this loving kindness of the seven-fold cause and effect, we have to establish in our mind that all other beings are equally close to us.

In order to establish this, we meditate on recognising all beings as our mother, since the relationship with our mother is generally the closest relationship we have had. Once we have established that as we have this close relationship with all other beings, then naturally the next two causes - remembering their kindness, and wanting to repay that kindness - will develop automatically.

If we go backward in the lam rim, or stages of the path, then before cultivating the stage of remembering all beings as our mother, we meditate on immeasurable equanimity. Prior to that we have to realise the uncertainty of friends and enemies. This meditation is taught in the stages of the path for the person of medium scope.

In order to realise this uncertainty of friends and enemies we have to follow the small scope teachings on the stages of the path - the teachings on the law of karma - gaining conviction and faith in them. To gain that conviction we must take refuge in the Three Jewels from the depths of our hearts. Doing that depends upon having fear of the suffering of rebirth in the lower realms. To fully understand that suffering we have to meditate on death and impermanence.

If we go further back in this meditation, we see how this human life of leisure and endowments is so rare and meaningful. To fully realise how rare and meaningful this perfect human life is, we must rely upon a qualified spiritual guru or teacher, who has to show us all the teachings. To be able to find such a perfect spiritual teacher depends upon success in the practice of purifying negativities, and accumulating merit. Therefore one must first engage in practice of the six preliminaries, of which the primary one is the seven limb practice.

## 422.321.11 Immeasurable Equanimity

ཚད་མེད་བཏང་སྦྱོམས།

Before beginning the meditation on recognising all beings as being like one's own mother, one must meditate on immeasurable equanimity. To explain the

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reason for this, the analogy of painting is used: in order to paint, the base upon which you paint must be even, soft and level. Likewise to generate bodhicitta our mental attitude towards others must also be even. If it is not, and we hold some close and others distant, then we cannot cultivate bodhicitta.

Here we must take note of the difference between the meditation on the immeasurable equanimity, which is the one discussed here as the preliminary to bodhicitta, and the immeasurable equanimity which is one of the four immeasurables.

The immeasurable equanimity which is one of the four immeasurables is the meditation in which one contemplates or wishes, "May all other beings be free from the thoughts of attachment and aversion of holding some close and others distant. How wonderful it would be if they were free of such thoughts of closeness and distance. May I be able to free them from those thoughts" and so on. Here the emphasis is upon the minds of other beings.

Whereas with the immeasurable equanimity which is a precondition to generating bodhicitta, the focus is personal - generating a state of equanimity in one's own mind.

It is very effective to focus upon one's own mind, seeing the biased attitudes of attachment and hatred, and trying to overcome these feelings, by seeing that with such an attitude there can be no true inner peace and happiness. Then we see the faults of having attachment to some, and hatred for others, and the negative influence this attitude has upon daily actions and decision making.

Before meditating upon immeasurable equanimity we should know about it very well: what the meditation actually means, and what its benefits are. This meditation is not to convince us that friends are not friends and enemies are not enemies. Rather its purpose is to get rid of attachment to friends, and hatred for enemies, and to enable us to see the benefits, not only at a theoretical level but also in a practical way.

If we examine very carefully then we see that our attachment is the main source of the problems for which we cannot find the right solutions. Because of attachment we have the problem of not having a particular friend. For the same reason, having found a friend then there is fear of losing that friend, and then there are the problems of difficulties in the relationship. There is also the problem of never being satisfied.

So if we look at the true cause of our problems in this way, we see they are all due to some conflict in our own minds. It is not something external. If we look inside, it is as if there is always some kind of war going on between our attachment and hatred. We become a victim of, and totally controlled by, that fight. We might have only one friend, but in our dealings with that friend we change, and show different moods. Sometimes we show happy moods, at other times we show a frowning face. This is all because of our attachment and hatred. The outer changes in our moods are all indications of our mental attitude to others.

Therefore we must realise that the reason why there are so many problems in our life, and the reason why we

must struggle so hard, is all because of conflict and delusion in our mind. In positive terms, with a settled mind then we shall find more peace and happiness within.

This shows how most of our problems are mentally created, but what is more important is to actually meditate on these problems, and see for ourselves that most of them are caused by attachment and hatred in our relationships with others. Deriving our knowledge through our own practice will give us impetus to overcome such delusions in our mind.

This desire or attachment within our mind can never be satisfied or fulfilled: it never stops wanting things. Desire or attachment can even want things that we cannot ever mentally and physically achieve in life. Being influenced by such unfulfilling desire is like being asked to carry a weight which is beyond your strength. Desire or attachment can be very misleading: it can make us pursue a goal which we have no hope of reaching.

There are many people where it so obvious that their problems and suffering are all because of some unfulfilled desire. Although the object which they seek in their mind is unachievable, because of desire they can not see this. In other words they are being completely deceived by some form of desire. They may experience a lot of suffering, yet to others they do not appear have any reason to suffer. Even though they have the best conditions surrounding them, driven by desire they cannot appreciate and enjoy those conditions. So they live a completely unfulfilled life.

In this way desire can bring such a great amount of suffering in life. Whereas with less desire, there will be more peace and satisfaction in our life. The Lord Buddha is an example of someone who, in this life, completely renounced all objects of desire, and who followed the path of non-desire or non-attachment. By following that path he reached the highest goal. Because of his practices, he is still admired as a great being not only by Buddhists, but also by followers of great religions such as Christianity or Hinduism.

It is wrong to think that if we diminish desire then we shall lose something in life. Rather we have to see that the opposite is true, that we shall gain more. In our personal life we shall find more satisfaction and have fewer problems.

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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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26 August 1997

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Cultivate the bodhicitta motivation which is wishing to achieve buddhahood for the sake of all beings. It is to fulfil this ultimate wish of enlightenment that we are studying these lam rim teachings. We should also reinforce our intention to practise what we learn in our study, in order to gain control over our minds.

## 422.321.11 Immeasurable Equanimity (continued)

ཚད་མེད་བཏང་སྟོབས།

We noted in the last teaching that if you want to paint or draw something, it is very important that the base of your painting is very even and smooth, otherwise you will not get a good result. Likewise if our mental attitude towards all beings is not made even, then any form of love or compassion we show to other beings would become biased or partial. Therefore it is important to train the mind with this meditation of immeasurable equanimity.

If we focus on our own attitudes towards other beings we might see that they are very biased: we have this attachment for those who we call friends, and aversion for others who we feel are enemies. For those who are neither enemy or friend there are neutral thoughts, and indeed there is some sense of abandoning those who we regard as neutral beings. With this biased attitude we have no hope of cultivating impartial love and compassion for all sentient beings.

This biased attitude is the source of many faults which we can see in our attitude and actions. Because of this attitude we are very narrow, and even sometimes very foolish. We feel joy or pleasure if we see that good things happen to our friends, but if the same thing happens to our enemy, it brings unhappiness to our mind without any true reason. If we see our friend suffering with an unpleasant situation or problem we feel unhappy, but if we see our enemy with that same problem we feel good, and wish that they had even more problems and suffering. Without a clear understanding the way our mental attitude changes in respect to other beings is totally deluded.

We should first meditate on immeasurable equanimity. In this meditation the object being observed is other beings: friends, enemies, and neutrals. There are two systems for visualising the objects of immeasurable equanimity. According to Lama Tsong Khapa's text *Great Expositions Of The Stages Of The Path*, you think of the three classes of beings in subsequent order: first you think of the neutral person, then having trained the mind

in equanimity with that neutral person, you do the same with respect to the friend, then finally to the enemy. Then, having trained in equanimity using the enemy, you extend this towards all sentient beings.

According to other lam rim traditions, instead of meditating using these three objects in subsequent order you use all three (friends, enemies, and neutral persons), at the same time, and then try to train one's mind to cultivate the state of equanimity towards these three. The lam rim text we are studying uses this latter system of visualising the three objects at the same time, and so shall we.

To begin this meditation on immeasurable equanimity, the first and most important thing is to just sit in the meditation posture, and try to remove all external distractions. Then try to imagine three people in front of you: a very close friend, an enemy and someone who is neither of these two. Try to develop as clear a picture of each of these three as possible, and focus single pointedly on them.

Then check what sort of attitude you have towards each of those three beings. If we have a very clear picture of them, then we can see that we have attachment to the friend, aversion towards the enemy, and the thought of abandoning the neutral person. It is important for us to see that these three different attitudes are caused by ourselves.

When we think of, or see a person who we hate, then we produce all sorts of negative states of mind. Sometimes we feel a very strong hatred or anger, and want to retaliate, or hurt or harm that person. At other times we feel strong jealousy towards that person, or there may be a very strong sense of competitiveness, in that you do not want to be inferior to, or lower than that person. You may also feel pride, feeling you are far better than that person. Those who we call 'enemy', and for whom we have a great feeling of hatred, are in fact a source of misery and problems in our life. However the real cause is our own mental attitude towards those we regard as enemies. It is our own mind which creates this problem and which cultivates negative thoughts and states of mind, and these thoughts can become so serious that we cannot enjoy ourselves, or even rest. They become a source of great unhappiness in our life. The questions now we must ask are why do we have this aversion for this person, and why we hate or dislike that person so much? There is only one reason: we have received harm from that person.

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In order to counteract this feeling of aversion towards an enemy because they have caused us harm, we have to contemplate the section in the medium scope path on General Suffering. One type of suffering of cyclic existence is called Uncertainty Of Relationships. This means that friend turns to enemy, enemy to friend, neutral persons become enemies and so forth. Here we have to contemplate on how our relationships with others, (friend, enemy or neutral) are not fixed, and are constantly changing.

We have to try to realise, that the same person we now see as an enemy, has in fact been our friend on numerous occasions in the past. So try to contemplate how this person has been of help on numerous times in the past. If we think in this way of the benefit, help and support we have received from this person in the past, it eradicates our aversion to that person. As said before, aversion arises because we see that person as having harmed us. But if we see that person as having benefited and supported us, then it has the opposite effect - that of seeing them as a friend.

It is said in a sutra: Sometimes an enemy becomes a friend, sometimes a friend becomes an enemy, and at other times they become a neutral person who in turn becomes a friend, and so on. Therefore if you realise the uncertainty of the changes between friend, enemy and neutral beings, then it is very clear that we should not classify some as absolute friends, and others as absolutely enemies and so forth. If we have intelligence and good discrimination then we should not have attachment towards some beings. Rather it is best to always abide in virtue, or wholesome action without attachment and aversion.

The sutra also shows the truth of this uncertainty of friends and enemies. It is important that we are aware of this, because our mind develops a strong fixed concept that this person who we regard as a very close friend will be a close friend forever. In reality however, this person is not eternally stamped as a friend or enemy. They change. With a strong fixed view of friendship and enmity, it becomes difficult to accept change in our friend or enemy. Because it is very difficult to accept such change, if a friend rejects us we have trouble accepting that, and this causes much pain. We know the mental suffering this causes from our own experience.

Why is this pain called suffering? Who has caused the suffering to our life? We must examine this using our own intellect and knowledge. We know that the pain and hurt we feel when a close friend leaves us is not the same as the physical pain we would feel if we were hit with an external object. The main reason for our pain is that we are not internally accepting the change, and thereby not changing our view. Although things have changed externally, in our mind they are still our friend. Of course this does not mean to say that we should not be friendly, but here the focus is on our attachment. Although our friend has changed, internally, we still have attachment and want that person to be as close as before. If we could produce some understanding of the fact that there is no certainty that a friend will be a friend forever, then when a friend rejects one, accepting they

have changed can give some relief to the pain.

We can also remind ourselves of what other teachings say about the uncertainty of friends, enemy and neutral persons. The great meditator Jamgon Jamyang said, "After hearing a few good and bad words which are then exaggerated by my conceptualised thought, the person who I see now as the closest friend to my heart, can, when the sun rises on the next day, seem to be my worst enemy. So it is better to cut this thought of holding some close and others distant."

Shantideva also said in *Bodhisattva's Way Of Life*, "Not just in past lifetimes, but even in the present one you can see the continuous change of a friend to enemy, and vice versa." Following the medium scope teaching on the uncertainty of friend, enemy and stranger and reflecting upon our own life and how we undergo changes ourselves, we can observe external changes, and realise that everyone we meet undergoes suffering because of this.

By understanding this we realise the uncertainty of friend, enemy and so forth. We should think that we can utilise this realisation to overcome problems which we have in our relationships. For instance someone may hold strong hatred towards their parents, because the parent caused some problem. Geshe-la instructs that maybe it is true that they did something wrong to you, but it is also true they gave you kind support and help in life. You should make a list of how much help and harm you received, and it is possible the help items may number one hundred, and there is one harm, and because of this one harm you have this hatred. It is because of your mental attitude that you hold some as friend, and some as enemy.

In this session we mainly focussed on the enemy in meditation, and how we generate hatred, and how to overcome that hatred. Next week we shall focus upon the friend as an object of this meditation.

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2 September 1997

We shall meditate on immeasurable equanimity. As discussed in last week's class choose the right sitting posture and make sure that your mind is abiding within yourself, then think of three beings - friend, enemy, and neutral - and cultivate a state of equanimity. One very important thing is to make sure that our mind is not distracted by any other object.

We tend to forget what we are not supposed to forget and always remember what we are supposed to forget. Sometimes meditation helps us to remember the things which we are supposed to do. The very funny thing about our memory is that sometimes there are particular things which we do not remember, but then they suddenly come to mind in other circumstances. Quite often in an exam you cannot remember things, but as soon as you finish and walk out to the toilet then it comes to mind. This is the nature of our memory.

As usual you should try to cultivate the bodhicitta mind, and use that as the motivation to listen to the teachings. It is important that even if you cannot cultivate genuine bodhicitta, you still pray that you can generate the true bodhicitta in the future.

## Immeasurable Equanimity: A Brief Meditation

Each of the three beings in front of you is respectively a cause to generate attachment, aversion, and the thought of abandonment, or a sense of disregard. In this meditation on equanimity, one also tries to contemplate the reasons why we have these three different attitudes. The obvious reason for aversion, or hatred for an enemy, is because you think that they have caused you some harm or loss. The reason why the thought of a friend spontaneously gives the pleasant feeling of joy and closeness, is because they have helped you by providing material things like food, clothing, or other forms of aid. Of course the reason why you have a sense of disregard for the neutral person is that you cannot recall having received any harm or help from that person.

In order to counteract these three different attitudes, and to cultivate an equal attitude towards the three beings we must recall the teachings of the medium stages of the path concerning the uncertainty of enemies, friends, and neutral beings.

As you do this you realise that even the person categorised as an enemy has, in the past, been your friend, and shown tremendous help and kindness. By doing this you overcome your hatred. Likewise the same person you see as a friend, and to whom you have some attachment, was an enemy in the past, and caused

you much harm. Doing this overcomes attachment. Similarly the neutral person has been both friend and enemy in the past, therefore there is no reason to disregard that person. This is a brief explanation of the meditation on immeasurable equanimity.

In this meditation we understand that these three types of beings are all the same, in that they have all been friend, enemy, or just in a neutral relationship with us. This gives rise to questions: which one should I love, which one should I hate, and which one should I ignore?

In the case of a friend, why be so attached to them when they have been an enemy many times in the past? This approach equalises our attitudes to all beings. We can see how in this meditation we are using logic and reason, the power of which can help our mind to transcend and to change. In our daily life the reason why our mind becomes so confused and worried about certain things, is just because the mind can not see things clearly, and lacks some understanding, or simple knowledge. Such simple knowledge might be just one reason, and that one reason might be enough to destroy our confused state of mind.

In the "Sutra requested by (a woman called) Dawa Chog", the Buddha said, "I have murdered you numberless times in the past, and similarly you have sliced up my body numberless times in the past. Likewise you cannot count the numberless times sentient beings have killed each other in the past". This sutra also shows the unreliability of friends, enemies, and neutral beings.

In general, we are also learning about the unreliability of our relationships with others. We can understand this by studying Scriptures such as Shantideva's *Bodhisattva's Way Of Life* and Gyalsas Togme's texts<sup>1</sup> and various Lam Rim teachings. These say that when your life is prospering, there are many who become friendly with. Even if you try run away from them, they follow you. Whereas if you become poor and destitute, they run away from you even if you seek them out. If we think about it, our own experiences of relationships with others confirm what the texts say.

It is important that we cultivate an awareness of the unreliability of friends and enemies, because they are one of the major sources of problems in our life. For example, it hurts us very much when a friend becomes an enemy. The reason a change in our relationship

<sup>1</sup> Editor: Bodhisattva Togme Sangpo was the author of *Thirty-seven Practices Of A Bodhisattva*

brings great shock and misery is because we are not fully aware of the changing nature of relationships, or the unreliability of friend and enemy. In our mind when we see someone as a friend or enemy, we see them as an absolute friend or enemy. Our mind is very fixed, so when change occurs, and a friend becomes an enemy, it is a great shock. Some people cannot cope with this change.

If we look further into the cause of why losing a friend causes such disturbance to our mind, it is because we are attached to our friend. Therefore attachment is something that we need to overcome in our relationships. In place of attachment, try to cultivate a true love, which means a true thought of giving and extending help to others. With true love, you will receive much help and benefit from your relationships with others.

We can see the importance of minimising attachment for our own sake, even if we cannot completely overcome it. Then friends will be less of a cause of suffering in our life. By doing, for example, the meditation on immeasurable equanimity, not only do we contemplate what we have learnt from the text, but also bring our own experience into our meditation. This can be very effective in gaining some realisations.

In this meditation on equanimity what we are trying to achieve is to overcome hatred for the enemy, strong attachment to friends and disregard for strangers. We also have to integrate these teachings into our practice. It is not enough to simply sit in meditation and say "I cannot hate an enemy because the same person has been my friend in the past". No matter how many reasons you see in meditation, they are not sufficient unless they help you to overcome, or at least minimise hatred towards enemies.

It is important to see the connection here between friends and enemies. Even if we can recollect receiving harm from a person, through this meditation we see how we received benefit and help from that same person in the past. In this way we see that the person we see as a friend, or an enemy, or a stranger has not always been our friend, or our enemy, or a stranger. It is very important that we see how this helps us to overcome hatred and attachment and so forth.

Besides this, we also have to see how hatred and attachment serves as a continuous source of suffering and misery in this life. For more happiness and joy and satisfaction in our life, we have to see how important it is to eliminate hatred and attachment. As we do this meditation, we have to have a general knowledge as to why we need to overcome and minimise hatred and attachment, and how through transforming ourself inwardly we can find some meaning and happiness in our life. It is important to have some belief in the fact that we can find happiness inwardly. Otherwise our approach is no different from the material world where the whole focus of finding happiness is on outer objects. If we have more understanding of the fact that many of the problems which we undergo in life are related to our own attachment to friends, and hatred for our enemies.

In the thought transformation teachings of Geshe Langri

Tanpa<sup>2</sup>, it says that it is possible to receive harm from someone in whom you have always placed great hope and trust. Most of us face becoming a victim of a close friend or relative, and this causes us some suffering. What we need to know is that the true cause of suffering is one's attachment to friends or relatives, and not necessarily that the friend has done something wrong, or that they have are lacking some worthy quality, as most people think. We have to see that such change is inevitable, and when it happens the reason it becomes a cause of suffering is because of one's attachment, because one's mind is very fixed with the idea that this person is very close. So it is important to use this meditation in order to at least minimise very strong, or fixed, hatred or attachment.

The idea that "If I find the right person then this will solve all my problems!", is also very deluded, because having friends is not necessarily a source of happiness. Indeed, having a friend can, in fact, be a source of problems. It is not just finding a friend, but there is also the thought that they will be with you forever. What if the friend later leaves? All this needs to be considered.

Many people have the thought that finding a friend is the most essential thing. So they believe that becoming rich, or influential, or having a very attractive and beautiful body will help to find that friend. Does being rich, good looking, and having many friends solve the problem of friendship? No, it does not. There are many wealthy, strong and attractive people who have more friendship problems because of their attractiveness.

We have to see that the real solution to life's problems and crises, and the real way to peace and happiness in life lies in minimising desire and hatred in the mind. If outer material objects were a cause of happiness then finding that object should eliminate suffering. There are even many teenagers who can see the benefits of meditation, and having a calm mind for dealing with the problems which they undergo at their stage in life.

### **The Meaning of the Dedication Prayer**

The dedication prayer beginning, "Ge wa di..." which we recite at the end of teachings, means "From this vast merit that I collect, May I quickly achieve enlightenment and help all sentient beings do likewise". As we say this we must dedicate whatever merit we collected by listening to this teaching, as well as all other merits we have collected, and the virtues of all other living beings to achieve full enlightenment for all sentient beings.

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<sup>2</sup> The Eight Verses Of Thought Transformation verse six "When someone whom I have assisted, and in whom I have placed great hope inflicts upon me extremely bad harm, I shall view that one as my supreme spiritual friend"

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Translated by Samdup Tsering

འཇིགས་རྒྱུ་ལྡན་གྱི་ལ་ལག་བཅུང་སྟེ།



9 September 1997

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Reinforce your bodhicitta motivation, which is to achieve the state of buddhahood for the benefit of all beings. With this motivation you should have the strong thought of putting all your effort into studying these lam rim teachings.

## Equanimity (continued)

In the last teaching we concluded that all sentient beings have served us equally as friends, enemies or as strangers. So therefore there is no reason for categorising any particular sentient being, as "my friend" because they have also been our enemy in the past. Likewise there is no reason to see other beings as enemies, and hold animosity towards them, since they have been our friend in the past.

Even in the relationships of this current life we see this uncertainty, where sometimes a friend can become an enemy. In this way one tries to remove this partisan attitude to other sentient beings: holding some close with attachment, and others distant with aversion.

## Wrong Interpretations of Equanimity

We should not think that since there is no certainty in friends and enemies, then what is the point of sustaining a friendship with others? Distancing ourselves, or discontinuing our friendly relationships with others would be using this teaching in the wrong sense.

What we are trying to achieve from this practice is to totally overcome attachment and hatred. It is true that friends will become enemies, or enemies may become friends, but we do not want to undergo suffering when that change occurs. Therefore we have to see that the suffering, which we undergo as a result of our changing relationships with others, is caused by our own delusions or afflictive emotions, in the form of our attachment and hatred. What we need to challenge and overcome, is attachment, which is not a positive emotion to have. We do not, however, want to eliminate our love or compassion for our friend. Our love and compassion is not for only when we see them as a friend. Even when they turn into an enemy, we still have to see them as someone who is deserving of our love and compassion.

## Understanding Equanimity from our own Perspective

Whether we see the reason why we should not have attachment or hatred from the point of view of our own sake (our own perspective), or from the perspective of the other sentient beings themselves, it is very clear that there is no point in having attachment and hatred.

We have to consider our own experience of attachment

and hatred, and how these influence our daily actions of the three doors of body, speech, and mind. We have to try and see from our own experience the sort of mental attitude we show to someone for whom we have attachment, and how that attitude influences our verbal and physical actions. Likewise we can investigate the influence of hatred upon our daily actions. Then we can see that due to attachment and hatred we accumulate a great number of negative karmas. Not only that, but as a result of these attitudes, we face many problems in life. Therefore from the point of view of our own life, having such attachment and hatred is a great source of problems and many negative actions.

## Understanding Equanimity from the Object's Perspective

Now from the point of view of other beings, is it right for us to call some of them friends, holding them close to our heart with attachment, and to call others enemy, regarding them with hatred? In reality all sentient beings are the same in that they all want happiness and to avoid suffering. So, from the point of view of other beings, we are not being just or fair if we say that only our friends deserve happiness, whilst our enemies deserve suffering.

From their side, those we see as enemies do not want suffering. If, from their side they wanted to suffer, then there would be nothing wrong from our side in causing them suffering and loss. But as this is not the case, it is therefore not right for us to treat them differently from a friend. As we discussed before, from their own side they have all equally been our close friend numberless times.

As the great master Kamalashila said, "There is no good reason to have such attachment and aversion, since there is no good reason if we look from the point of view of our own side, or from the side of other beings."

It is important that we engage in this meditation on immeasurable equanimity until we gain some realisations. Even if it is not an inner experience, but even at just a very theoretical level we can cultivate this state of equanimity towards all beings, holding neither attachment nor hatred. As said before, in this meditation we have to try to see how all sentient beings have the same form of connection with us, in terms of friend or enemy, or in terms of giving help or harm, not only in this life but in all previous lives. There is no difference whether someone gives us help and benefit in this life, but harm in past lives. Therefore, there is no difference between receiving help or harm in this, or in past

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lifetimes.

### **The Ten Beggar Analogy**

We can think of all beings in terms of this analogy: if ten beggars come to you seeking help, you have to understand that you cannot favour one over the others, because they are all equally begging for help. They are all the same in being destitute, and needing food and drink.

We should make an effort in our meditation, therefore, to try to understand why we should not have attachment or hatred, and that emotionally we should see that all sentient beings are the same. Start this meditation by focussing on selected beings who you see as enemies, and through meditation try to minimise, or remove, this hatred. Then extend this same meditation to other beings. As we do this meditation over and over again, and develop our knowledge, then we can cultivate this feeling of equanimity towards all beings.

It is not easy to gain this feeling as an inner experience or realisation, but at least on the level of knowledge, when we are engaged in this meditation we can see all sentient beings with the same mental attitude.

It is said that if we could cultivate this state of equanimity within our mind, then we have established the foundation to generate the bodhicitta mind. On the other hand if we have not built this foundation of the state of equanimity, then there is no hope of cultivating bodhicitta.

Even though we are not yet able to gain true realisations of equanimity, it is still worthwhile to put an effort into this by praying, "May I be able to show such a state of equanimity to all beings at all times." We can also pray very strongly, "May I be able to always serve and benefit all beings." Make this prayer strong, or perhaps make the personal vow to never cause harm to any other being. Even a prayer from our heart such as this can be a cause to cultivate this state of equanimity, and thereby the mind of enlightenment and bodhicitta.

### **Discussion Night**

It is discussion night next week. The compulsory question for the test on the following week will be on the quotation from Atisha's *Lamp of the Path For Enlightenment*, which defines the person of great scope, "One who wholly seeks a complete end to the entire suffering of others because their suffering belongs to his own (conscious) stream, that person is a superior."

The one week meditation retreat commitment of the study group is coming soon. Geshe-la says it should run for six Thursday nights beginning on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October, and ending on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November. The 21<sup>st</sup> of November is an auspicious day, - when Buddha descended from heaven - so on that night we will have a Study Group puja. On each meditation night you have to do all the things that have been done in the past.

Start with cleaning the gumpa and so forth, and set out the water bowls. As many of you work and Thursday does not suit, then you can do the cleaning on the previous Sunday. Cleaning duty is one of the six preliminary practises, and cleaning the area is a process

of cleaning your mind. It is a good idea to review the teachings on what sort of mental attitude one should have when sweeping the area and so forth.

As to each night's meditation topic, last year we did a meditation on the Twelve Links. This year the topic is the bodhicitta mind. To help with this meditation Geshe Doga says to use the prayer *Foundation of all Excellence*. Read the prayer up to the verse "Please Guru Buddha send me blessings to generate bodhicitta in my mind". Then continue with the actual meditation, the duration of which will depend upon your own timetable, then continue with the rest of the prayer.

Part of the session is a recitation of Shantideva's *Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. Do the same as in previous years.

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

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### **Note on authentication**

The original typescript is prepared by Jenny Molloy from Alan Molloy's original transcript, which has been checked against Damien Busby's notes. Adair Bunnett then checks the typescript against a tape recording, and edits the text, which is finally checked by Alan Molloy.



**TARA INSTITUTE**  
**STUDY GROUP DISCUSSION NIGHT-16 September 1997**

**Covering discourses 19/8/97 to 9/09/97**

- 1/ Starting with the Bodhicitta mind, describe the stages of it's development in reverse order, going back to the initial stage of relying upon a qualified spiritual master.
- 2/ Discuss why it is important to generate a sense of equanimity to all sentient beings before beginning our meditation on Bodhicitta?
- 3/ If our friend and enemy were to undergo the same suffering, why would we only show concern for our friend?
- 4/ Describe why strong feelings of hatred are generated towards an enemy. What contemplation will help to reduce these negative feelings?
- 5/ Describe why strong feelings of attachment are generated towards a friend. Give examples of how attachment has caused you suffering.
- 6/ Why do we have feelings of indifference or abandonment to a stranger?
- 7/ Differentiate between love and attachment
- 8/ Since all sentient beings have been our friend, enemy and stranger, does this mean we should not try to sustain our friendship with others? Discuss.

**Compulsory question**

- 9/ Discuss the meaning of the following verse composed by Atisha

"One who wholly seeks a complete end to the entire suffering of others because their suffering belongs to his own (conscious) stream, that person is a superior"

**Tara Institute**  
**Study Group Test - 23 September 97**  
**Covering discourses 19-8-97 to 9-9-97**

**Time allowed: 1 hr**

Answer any 4 from questions 1 - 6. Question 7 is compulsory.

1. Discuss why it is important to generate a sense of equanimity to all sentient beings before beginning our meditation on Bodhicitta?
2. If our friend and enemy were to undergo the same suffering, why would we only show concern for our friend?
3. Describe why strong feelings of hatred are generated towards an enemy. What contemplation will help to reduce these negative feelings?
4. Describe why strong feelings of attachment are generated towards a friend. Give examples of how attachment has caused you suffering.
5. Differentiate between love and attachment.
6. Since all sentient beings have been our friend, enemy and stranger, does this mean we should not try to sustain our friendship with others? Discuss.

**Compulsory question**

7. Discuss the meaning of the following verse composed by Atisha.

“One who wholly seeks a complete end to the entire suffering of others because their suffering belongs to his own (conscious) stream, that person is a superior.”