

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་བཅངས།



2 March 1999

Today is the last of the first fifteen days of the first lunar month of the year. The significance of these auspicious days is that on each day the Lord Buddha manifested miracles in order to overcome evil forces. So we recite prayers in remembrance of the qualities and the life of the Lord Buddha.

Try to cultivate the bodhicitta motivation, thinking that through receiving this teaching we can achieve buddhahood to benefit all living beings. Also think that this teaching is to be put into practice to destroy the self-centred mind, and to cultivate in its place the altruistic mind of enlightenment.

422.321.27 The Instructions On Thought Transformation

བསྐྱེད་བྱ་ཉེར་གཉིས།

In the commentary on the lam rim, *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, we are studying the famous Thought Transformation text *Seven-Point Thought Transformation*. This text has seven major headings and we are up to the last one, which is The Instructions on Thought Transformation.

The first line of this verse reads:

Practise all yogas (or activities) by one

This refers to the bodhicitta mind that we have just cultivated as our motivation. It says that we should make sure that the motivation behind whatever action or spiritual practice we undertake is the bodhicitta mind.

Including such a bodhicitta mind in all our actions, it is said, is effective in quickly gathering enormous merit, which can be a cause to achieve buddhahood. If possible it should be a genuine bodhicitta, induced through cultivating love and compassion for all beings. If it is not possible to cultivate such a pure spontaneous bodhicitta then it can even be an artificial bodhicitta: the thought of benefiting or showing some sense of care and responsibility for others.

As we studied early in the text, it is very important and beneficial to cultivate bodhicitta not only during the sitting meditation period, but also in the post-meditation period when we are engaged in different activities. It is instructed that we should train ourselves over and over again to cultivate the bodhicitta mind, whether it be genuine or artificial, in all our actions of body, speech and mind.

Many of you have heard the story of King Sergyel, who requested the Lord Buddha for advice. King Sergyel explained that as king he could not abandon his

responsibility for the busy affairs of state, and that he was in no position to do single-pointed meditation. However he still wanted to do the mahayana practice, so he wished to know how he could manage this without giving up his kingly responsibilities.

The Lord Buddha replied that it was true that the King had many responsibilities, and could not sit in meditative concentration all the time. So the Buddha advised King Sergyel that he should try to incorporate the bodhicitta into all his activities. He said, "By doing this then the actions you do serve as cause to achieve the state of buddhahood, yet you do not need to abandon your state responsibilities as a king". Following these words of the Buddha, Shantideva also emphasised the importance and the benefit of including bodhicitta motivation in all our actions.

What we can understand from this advice is that there is an opportunity for everyone to practise the mahayana dharma through the bodhicitta practice. If we think about this teaching, then it is clear that achieving the state of buddhahood does not necessarily mean giving up the status, structure or activities of the life we lead. Even for a lay person every action provides the opportunity to include bodhicitta mind, so every action can be therefore transformed as a cause to achieve the state of buddhahood.

Even if we are in circumstances wherein we suffer physical pain or mental anguish, we could, as we have discussed in previous teachings, transform even these adverse circumstances into causes to achieve buddhahood. All we need to do in these circumstances is to engage in the meditation on Taking which involves developing strong compassion for the infinite number of other beings, and thinking how they undergo such physical and mental suffering. Then, thinking of their suffering, wish that your personal suffering will be a cause to free all other beings from their suffering. Try to feel strong compassion and sympathy for the suffering of other beings, and pray that you take upon yourself the infinite suffering they experience, so that they will be free of it. Likewise by engaging in the meditation on Giving we imagine, with genuine love and kindness, giving all our good qualities of mind and body, our wealth and possessions to others.

As every action we do can be motivated by bodhicitta mind, so every single action we perform can serve as a cause to achieve buddhahood for the sake of all beings. This is why the text says 'Practise all yogas by one'. By practising bodhicitta all the time, we can quickly gather

enormous merit.

As mentioned earlier we can practise bodhicitta mind if we are undergoing problems such as mental unhappiness, or pain in our body. As has been explained we can transform that experience into a cause to achieve buddhahood. Likewise the good health, abundant wealth and possessions that we may enjoy can be transformed into the path to enlightenment.

When we eat or drink this also can be transformed into the path. When we eat food and drink to nourish our body we do so in order to serve and benefit others. We can think that the food we eat goes to the thousands of germs and bugs in our body. There are said to be 84,000 germs living in our body, so we give our food to them, and so nourish and satisfy them. We also pray that in future we may please all these germs by giving Dharma to them.

When we sleep, we can think that we do so to rest and nourish the body. This is an important activity as there are certain elements of the body that can only be nourished and regenerated by sleeping. So we sleep so as nourish our body in order to benefit other beings.

Each morning when we take a shower or bath we can think "I am cleansing the stains of delusions and mental afflictions of all other beings". Likewise when vacuuming or sweeping the room, think that you are removing the dust and filth of mental delusion in the minds of all living beings, which serves as the source of their bondage to cyclic existence. All actions can be used in this way, for example, switching on a light can be dispelling the ignorant darkness in the minds of all living beings. Opening a door is opening the door to liberation for all living beings, by liberating them from the lower realms.

'Practise all yogas by one' means trying to integrate the bodhicitta mind in all actions that we do. This practice of the bodhicitta mind is said to be the most effective and beneficial practice of all.

Generally speaking, our day-to-day practice according to these teachings is to maintain a very good heart towards others. This has many benefits even for one's own self. We may set ourselves goals such as buddhahood or liberation from cyclic existence, but can we actually achieve such a goal in this lifetime? Geshe-la does not know about you, but he says he cannot achieve this for himself. So that is why Geshe-la always emphasises the importance of happiness in our mind, and sound physical health.

We should try to understand how, if these teachings are put into practice, they can bring lasting peace and happiness in our mind. As we have just discussed, with this Thought Transformation practice we are able to see every circumstance which we encounter in life as acceptable, and not as a source of problems. The cause of problems is not necessarily adverse situations such as poverty or sickness, because even good conditions can bring us suffering. You have found a friend but this is not good enough; you have found wealth but this is not good enough; you must find more wealth or a different friend. So there is no end to suffering. If we try to see every situation as an opportunity to practise bodhicitta,

then no situation is bad. Even if you face some loss in life you do not become overly disturbed. At the very least if you try to integrate this bodhicitta practice, then you can minimise unnecessary problems from which you might otherwise suffer as a result of your mental attitude. We have to remind ourselves to utilise the good conditions that would otherwise distract our mind, and make full use of them.

Although we talk of "actual practice" we may not have yet generated bodhicitta mind. In theory it sounds good, but in practice we have not yet generated it. However it is important to cultivate some appreciation of this mind. When it comes to your actual practice, it is in relation to the attitude you have towards the people with whom you have direct interaction in life. Who are these people? They are a small in number and usually related in some way: your partner, your friends, your relatives. To make progress in our bodhicitta practice we have to actually produce bodhicitta; you have to start developing some close feelings towards those people and this must be perfected. You must also overcome and minimise ill-thought towards those people. If you do that you will find yourself in a position of lasting peace and happiness.

In other words due to this familiarity with bodhicitta practice, with consideration for others, and understanding of their needs you will have some joy and stability within yourself. Then you can enjoy peace and happiness regardless of where, or with whom you live - whether it be with others or by yourself. Regardless of all these factors you can enjoy and find this peace and happiness within yourself.

When addressing the Tibetan community, H.H. the Dalai Lama said the Tibetan community should understand the benefit of the living spiritual tradition existing in their culture, in terms of individual peace and happiness in the society. However people should not just have blind faith in Buddha's teachings and practices, but rather should learn about it. He said this because, he said, he had been told by many wealthy and famous western people who had lived in Tibetan communities that, despite the poverty of many Tibetan communities, these westerners had still learnt from these communities how to find lasting peace and happiness in their own lives. Many problems which exist in the West do not exist in the Tibetan community, because of the influence of Buddhism. The minds of Tibetan people are calmer and more peaceful, and so produce far fewer conceptual thoughts than people living in modern western cities.

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

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9 March 1999

Ensure that your motivation in listening to, and studying these lam rim teachings is bodhicitta - the altruistic mind to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

422.321.27 Instructions On Thought Transformation (cont)

We continue with the section Instructions on Thought Transformation. The root text says:

Practise every suppression of interference by one.

This instruction must be put into practice when we face hindrances in our practice of Thought Transformation. Even if we have studied, and find ourselves with the right opportunity and facilities, we may still face hindrances and difficulties in beginning our practice; we may face sicknesses or we may feel very negative. We may even feel frustrated, because we think the practice in which we are engaging is ineffective or even counter-effective. Instead of decreasing delusion the practice [seems to] result in more delusion, and more disturbing thoughts and mental afflictions being present in our mind. It is also possible that we might feel uncertain as to whether we have enough financial facilities to support ourselves in order to continue with this [spiritual] practice. All these difficulties can arise when we engage in the practice.

In the lam rim text, *Liberation In The Palm Of The Hand* the instruction is that all these problems can be resolved by one means, which is the bodhicitta practice of Exchanging Self With Others. This instruction can also mean applying the meditation of Giving and Taking in order to encourage yourself to face these difficulties, through understanding that what you undergo is a worthy cause - what you undergo is not only for yourself, but to relieve all beings from suffering. Try to raise your awareness of all the pain and suffering experienced in the universe, and see how the problems and suffering you experience at present are not exclusive to yourself, but experienced by countless other sentient beings. By applying the Giving and Taking meditation try to understand that that the practice that you are doing is for the sake of all sentient beings. Try to adjust your view to see that the hindrances you are going through are positive and acceptable, and a cause for all other beings to be free of such problems, praying "May my practice be a cause for all other beings to be free of such problems".

Why Is Our Mind So Distracted During Meditation?

As said before, if we do not interpret it properly, facing

problems in controlling the mind during meditation can be a cause of frustration, and can discourage one from continuing with meditation. It is important to understand why all these problems are more apparent within meditation rather than when you are not meditating.

We must look at how our state of mind in meditation is so different from our non-meditating mind. During meditation we are making a special effort to observe and control the mind. When we are not meditating (and not making this special effort to observe or control our mind), our mind is always preoccupied with some object of distraction. Along with our mind we also find ourselves indulging in this object of distraction. What overpowers and controls our mind in that indulgence is what we call mental delusion, or mental affliction, or just mental distraction.

We are somehow misled into believing that there is some purpose or satisfaction that we can experience, so we see that as something positive. Is it really positive? Is what we experience true satisfaction? If we investigate then we find that the basis of the satisfaction or pleasure in which we are indulging, is an external object of distraction dependant upon something outside of ourself. If we turn towards ourself, however, then we see that the satisfaction or pleasure we find is not within ourselves.

When we practise meditation we cut from our mind all the objects of distraction. When our mind is within ourself we find that there is nothing to excite or satisfy us, and give us pleasure. Rather you find something very disturbing. We find how we are controlled and overpowered by these mental delusions. So when we practise meditation there seems to be more delusion, and our mind is more distracted. It is said that in one way we can see this as a sign of progress, because we are now in a position where we can recognise these mental delusions.

Since we can now see the mental distraction and delusion very clearly, we can see how it drives us to external objects of pleasure that are only superficial and temporary. This reminds us that what we are seeking is inner peace and happiness, which is more lasting permanent and stabilising. If you realise this you can see that your own peace and happiness is something internal, from which flows a true sense of peace and happiness. Therefore try to recognise that this mental delusion and distraction occurring in meditation is the number one enemy of peace and happiness in your

whole life.

Delusion has always misled you. Realising this, you should try to generate the determination to recognise mental delusion as an enemy, rather than as a positive experience. Then you can challenge and defeat it.

The next line of the root text is:

There are two duties - at the beginning and at the end.

This is saying that in any virtuous action we undertake, there are two things to always remember: ensuring the correct motivation in the beginning and ensuring that we dedicate at the end.

The Difference Between Dedication And Prayer

Before we go any further, the distinction between the term 'dedication' and 'prayer' is that dedication requires some object or substantial cause to dedicate, whereas praying does not necessitate a specific cause.

At The Beginning

Let us say that we have cultivated the bodhicitta mind to begin our practice. What the bodhicitta motivation does is to explain the aim of our practice. The cause of our practice is to achieve full enlightenment for the sake of all living beings.

At The End

At the end of your practice it is important to dedicate the merit. This means that you direct your practice to the same intended cause you had in your mind at the beginning. So dedication is like sealing the merit that you have created in your practice. If you dedicate the merit, this can also multiply the merit created. So even if the virtue created is very small, by dedication it can become enormous.

Practice On A Daily Basis

It is important that we integrate this practice of bodhicitta mind on a daily basis. When we get up in the morning try to remember to motivate ourselves to engage in beneficial actions throughout the day. For the first thought in the morning try to pray "May the two types of bodhicitta always accompany my mind". During the day try to apply mindfulness and alertness with regard to the practice of bodhicitta, and try to remember how important it is to have the influence of bodhicitta mind presiding over your daily actions.

At the end of the day, on going to sleep, try to remember to review your actions of the day. Have they been in accord with the bodhicitta mind, or have your actions contradicted the bodhicitta mind? If your actions contradicted bodhicitta then do some purification practice. If some, or most of your actions were in accord with the bodhicitta motivation, then try to feel positive and to rejoice in those actions. Of course at the beginning applying these practices on a daily basis will be difficult because they are so different. However if we make some effort to integrate this practice, then eventually we shall become very familiar with it, and effortlessly remember to do it all the time.

We have covered teachings which give some idea on how bodhicitta practice can be integrated day-by-day, and how it can be integrated into one meditation session. Normally one meditation session has three parts - the

beginning, middle and end. In daily terms, the beginning is rising from bed, the middle is the actions we do during the day and the end is going to bed.

We said earlier how important it is that we begin the day with a positive mind, which means having bodhicitta mind. Then we can see what a difference this makes to our whole day, what we do and what we experience. In the same way our whole day will be spoiled and miserable if, right from the beginning when we arise from bed, our mind is preoccupied with some problem, or any kind of afflictive negative emotions. Then the mind is not clear and very distracted. If we examine we can see how it effects us. Likewise we can see how important it is to maintain some sense of mindfulness and alertness during the day, otherwise it is so easy to completely forget our practice, and to engage in various negative actions.

When we go to bed try to relax the mind by removing all distracting thoughts of daytime activities, then cultivate the bodhicitta mind. With this very calm and peaceful mind we can go to sleep without trouble. Then our whole time of sleep becomes a practice called the Yoga of Sleeping, with many benefits.

The important thing that can help us make progress with our practice, and make it easier to perform, is to practise by relaxing ourself mentally and physically, and not to rush it expecting a quick result. So practise according to the pace that suits you, and try to progress step by step. This is very important to remember in our practice.

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16 March 1999

Try to reinforce your bodhicitta motivation by thinking "I am receiving these teachings and putting them into practice in order to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings".

We have talked about how, prior to undertaking any action, it is important to ensure that our motivation for doing that action is the right one. There are many advantages in doing so, not just in spiritual practice but also in our other daily actions. With the right mental attitude, we shall cultivate harmony in our conversations with others, and so the conversation will be effective. We often have discussions with friends or family, and if we have the right motivation then it develops understanding of each other, making the relationship closer, and so develop more harmony.

There should be some differences in our mental conduct when talking with friends and enemies. If our motivation when talking to our friend is the same as we hold when talking to an enemy, the outcome will be to turn the friend into an enemy. With a negative attitude the discussion becomes a struggle for your own selfish ideas, with "I am right and you are wrong" assertions. Because you began the discussion with the wrong attitude you become deaf to what the other is saying.

Instructions of Thought Transformation (cont)

The next instruction in the Thought Transformation root text is:

Endure whichever situation arises - either good or bad

The main indication here is to never lose sight of Dharma practice, and to never allow any situation, whether good or bad, to weaken your spiritual practice. This is a very important point to understand and remember since the usual cause of diminishing effort, enthusiasm and time for our spiritual practice is that our situation is either good and improving, or deteriorating.

Some people, when they become very rich, famous and educated lose all the good qualities which they possessed in their personality before, especially the quality of kind-heartedness. Wealth and fame can make people very arrogant and pompous, and then they mistreat and abuse others. Following some gain in their life they forget the value of spiritual practice particularly the attitude of kind-heartedness. [This instruction advises us] to maintain this attitude of kind-heartedness, whether we are rich or poor, whether our situation is improving or deteriorating.

If our situation is poor or deteriorating then we may find it very hard to endure the difficulties and problems we

encounter. The problems we face can be so overwhelming they can cause us to forget our spiritual practice and even lose faith. What can we do to find a way to maintain faith in our spiritual practice and our kind-heartedness in all circumstances? We need to keep the law of cause and effect or karma alive at all times in our minds, and to understand all our situations from the perspective of the law of karma. Showing kind-heartedness to each other is the core practice of Dharma. Remembering this we can overcome or prevent deterioration in our spiritual practice in any circumstance we face.

In good circumstances we see that our good conditions are the result or fruit of our own positive karma, or the merit we have accumulated in the past. These good conditions should then inspire us to do more practice, as they give us the opportunity to engage in actions to benefit others.

Likewise all the downturns we face in life are the indications of the ripening result of negative karma. Therefore we are encouraged to purify our negative actions, so that we do not need to undergo these same results in future. It is also a good opportunity to understand that there are many others undergoing far worse suffering than our own, and to cultivate some sympathy and compassion for them, based on our understanding of their suffering.

Kind-heartedness is a very valuable and precious quality which we should always possess. We all have some seed or even some degree of kind-heartedness in our mind, but we need to depend upon the spiritual teachings to recognise that this quality of kind-heartedness is the most beautiful thing to possess, [because] it benefits ourselves as well as others.

We also have to see the converse. If this quality of kind-heartedness diminishes then more problems of suffering and misery develop in life. You can notice that when people lack this kind-hearted quality, you do not see them as trustworthy, or as a friend. Some people, after acquiring a lot of wealth or fame, lose all their friends and are rejected by everyone. Because of their wealth they become arrogant and totally lack respect and concern for the needs and views of others. They may be rich and famous, but their situation is clearly worse, in that they suffer more loneliness and confusion than when they were poor.

We have to understand that we all have a mind which is with us at all times; there is no time when this mind is not with us. Because this mind accompanies us all the

time it shapes and influences all our experiences and actions. So the type of mind which goes with us shapes our nature, in terms of our humanity, and shapes our personality in the eyes of others. Try to understand the benefit of learning and integrating this spiritual practice into our lives [from this perspective]. This practice teaches us how to cultivate, and always possess the positive kind-hearted mind. When we possess this, we know from our own experience that regardless of our situation, there is peace and happiness within us and so we are in a position to benefit others, promoting peace and happiness in the outside world.

The spiritual practice emphasised over and over by such masters as Shantideva is taming the mind, and getting rid of all the negative states we produce.

The next instruction in the root text is:

Guard both points more preciously than your life.

The two points indicated here are:

1. General things about Dharma and
2. The specific pledges of Thought Transformation [covered in section six of the root text, *Seven Verses of Thought Transformation*].

General things about Dharma refers to safeguarding any vows or spiritual pledges, and trying to understand that preserving those vows and pledges is the foundation for all your spiritual practice - the basis for studying Dharma.

If, however, you have not taken such formal vows or pledges, you have to understand that the basis for your spiritual practice is the moral practice of refraining from the ten non-virtues. Based on this practice of moral ethics you go about your Dharma studies.

After this the root text says:

Practise the three hardships

These three hardships are the hardships of challenging and counteracting any mental delusion or affliction.

1. In the first place it is very hard to prevent mental delusions from arising, and then hard to apply the remedy to remove them.
2. In the middle it is very hard to break the continuity of the presence of mental delusions.
3. Lastly, it is hard to uproot the cause of any mental delusion.

The instruction here is that because these three tasks are so difficult, we need to equip ourselves with the learning and training so that we can:

1. Right from the beginning prevent delusion from arising.
2. Counter delusion once it has arisen. In other words, apply the appropriate remedy.
3. Eventually cut the continuation of the delusion by completely uprooting it.

These instructions help us to consolidate our spiritual practice as a means of overcoming or purifying the negativities of mental delusion. As implied here, overcoming or challenging mental delusion depends on whether we apply a remedy.

Of course it is best if, right from the beginning, we prevent mental delusions from arising, and we need to

know how to achieve that. If mental delusion has already arisen in our mind we cannot relax and accept it - we have to counteract it. If we apply a remedy, by making an effort and by practising some meditation to overcome it, then the mental delusion (even a negative and destructive one) can be reduced or overcome. We have to remind ourselves that the teaching says that the sign of progress in our meditation practice is the reduction of mental delusions. So if we practise meditation then any mental delusions can be completely purified or eliminated.

How should we approach meditation practice? Meditation is the result of listening to, studying and contemplating the spiritual teachings. This all makes sense. When we actually engage in counteracting mental delusion, we must first recognise the mental delusion, and we must have a reason to overcome it. We shall only motivate ourselves to counter mental delusion if we recognise it, and if we see its great shortcomings. So we listen to and study Dharma to recognise mental delusions, their results, and their consequences.

However we can not just leave it at hearing about, knowing or studying mental delusion. At this stage our learning of Dharma is only based upon what we read or hear from others. Rather than relying on what you have learnt from others, the next step is to contemplate and reflect for yourself, trying to recognise your own mental delusions and through your own reasoning mind, see their faults and shortcomings. It is said that the knowledge gained by studying depends upon outer forces, whereas the knowledge gained by contemplating depends upon self knowledge. The most effective spiritual progress is made through hearing, studying, and contemplating, and then engaging in meditation. Then you are well equipped for your practice.

Question: What are the seven points of the *Seven Point Thought Transformation* text?

1. Preliminary teaching on the type of life basis
2. Actual teaching on the bodhicitta mind
3. Transforming adverse circumstances into the path
4. Consolidating all the teaching as one lifetime practice
5. Measurement of having trained the mind
6. Pledges of thought transformation
7. Actual instructions of thought transformation (of which there are twenty two).

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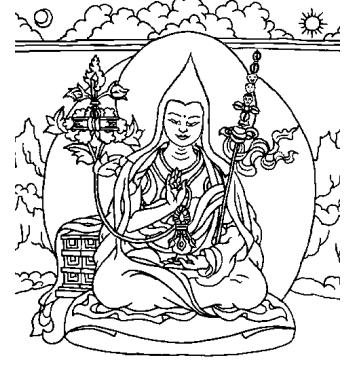
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23 March 1999

Cultivate the bodhicitta motivation by aspiring to achieve full enlightenment in order to benefit all sentient beings, and with this motivation listen to the teaching, and think of putting it into practice.

Instructions On Thought Transformation (cont)

The next line of verse seven of the root text is:

Attain the three principal causes

Although there are many favourable causes and conditions for practising Dharma there are three principal ones.

1. The first principal cause is having met the Mahayana guru or teacher. This does not need to be explained because without finding the right spiritual teacher or guide there is no-one to direct us to the path.
2. The second principal cause is having the right frame of mind. Having met the right spiritual teacher is not sufficient. This second condition states that from one's own side there should be a genuine interest and faith and respect in Dharma.
3. The third principal cause is having all basic material needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Our life depends upon this gross physical form or body, and sustaining this body depends upon basic material conditions. We may have found the first two conditions, but without the third then we are not in a position to practise Dharma.

If we possess these three conditions then we should think how fortunate we are, and try to make the best use of them by following Dharma practice. If we do not possess these conditions then try to think of integrating the Taking meditation: cultivate compassion for other beings, especially those who, like you, lack these conditions and out of compassion take upon yourself their misfortune.

The next line of the root text is:

Meditate on the three undeclining attitudes

1. The first of these is the undeclining attitude of faith and respect in the guru, which is particularly important in the Mahayana teachings, because the guru is the source for all of the Mahayana qualities.
2. The second undeclining attitude is a keen interest in the practice of Thought Transformation. This is important because Thought Transformation is regarded as the essence of Mahayana teaching and practice.
3. The third important attitude is undeclined

mindfulness and alertness in safeguarding all moral practices, vows and pledges that we have taken. This also refers to maintaining mindfulness and alertness in safeguarding even minor rules of moral ethics.

Relating This To Friendship

The first undeclining attitude of faith and respect in the guru can also relate to our other spiritual friends. It can be a practice to develop more faith, respect and appreciation in our relationships with friends, especially our spiritual friends.

To do this we have to show a greater sense of care and consideration for our spiritual friends. In our manner of communication and all other such interactions, we should try to please them by speaking in a very right and pleasant manner, and provide them with all the help they need, even if it means material needs such as food and drink. We should also stop all actions which annoy them, and that bring unhappiness to their lives. This includes those actions listed in the Thought Transformation text, such as not exposing their faults. Rather, try to see spiritual friends as treasures, which need to be hidden away. Instead of seeking out and speaking about the faults in other people, we should train ourself to seek out and speak about the good qualities in our spiritual friends.

This practice not only benefits us in this and future lives, but it also benefits others because in speaking of their positive qualities, we are giving a testimonial to their lives. Then they will receive more trust and faith from others, which will help boost their image in the eyes of the world. It is similar to the way advertising works: promoting someone's qualities as exceptional, influences the view others have of that person. The whole point is our motivation of benefiting others, so that they can become more important and highly regarded.

The term "faith" means the feeling or trust that you cultivate when you see someone with many qualities or qualifications. When we see a person as having no good qualities, and only faults and weaknesses then we have no faith or trust in them. Whereas respect is the feeling of gratitude towards someone who you remember has shown great kindness and support.

In talking about the importance of not speaking of the faults of others we are talking about an essential part of our spiritual practice which can truly bring more peace and joy in our own mind, as well as the minds of many others. If we do not change this attitude of always

looking down on others and seeing their faults, then we shall never see their good qualities. This is not only harmful to our relationship with them, but it also destroys our own good qualities. This attitude can also serve as the source of unending problems for us.

There are some people who always talk of others in terms of their faults. Directly they are talking about others, but indirectly this reflects their own problems and weaknesses. It is so important to learn to recognise the qualities of those close to us, rather than always seeing their faults.

We should not wonder why our spiritual practices are directed to pleasing others. The reason we please others is to please ourselves; we have to understand how pleasing others can be a source of more joy and happiness for ourselves. We must also realise that we cannot expect any other person to be perfect, any more than we can expect ourselves to be perfect. The question of how perfect someone is, and how many faults and qualities they have, depends to a large extent upon our own mind, and how we perceive that person. [We should follow] the example of the great Thought Transformation text master Geshe Langri Tangpa who had great admiration for all beings, even those full of faults. He could see even a tiny quality as a great and worthy thing to be respected.

We can benefit from this practice in mundane relationships in daily life by learning from each other, rather than finding faults in each other. We can try to learn not to speak about, or to criticise others for their faults, whilst at the same time being aware of not being influenced by their faults. What we should always try to recognise in them is not their faults but their good qualities, and on the basis of their good qualities try to build an image of that person. Then as Geshe Langri Tangpa says, even one tiny quality is enough for us to respect them, and see them as a great being.

If we put this into practice then there are tremendous benefits: all our relationships will be very meaningful. Even if a relationship is finished, if it has been meaningful then you will not feel as if you wasted your time. When it ends there may be no direct relationship, but indirectly there is a relationship in the sense that you feel gratitude to that person, who you feel has given you something. This is a way of viewing people from the point of view of the qualities that they have.

The next line of the root text is:

Possess the three inseparables

The three inseparables are the virtuous actions of body, speech and mind. What this is saying is to incorporate virtue into all our actions of our three doors all the time. Virtuous actions of body are actions such as prostrations and circumambulating; virtuous actions of speech are reciting mantras or prayers; virtuous actions of mind are cultivating love and compassion for others, and faith and refuge in holy objects, then at all times our three doors are engaged in virtuous actions. We should not be as we were in the past before meeting the Dharma when, if we had leisure time we became absent minded in our actions. We should think of the benefits and the

possibility of incorporating these virtuous actions (such as reciting mantras) all the time, to help us prevent idle worldly gossip, or to overcome pride. So at all times try to apply mindfulness and alertness so we are not forgetful of our spiritual practice. Damien Busby for example, recites mantras with his mala in one hand while driving.

Next week we have a teaching break for a Study Group Discussion Night. The written test will be on the following week. The compulsory question for the test is these two lines from the text:

“There are two duties - at the beginning and at the end.”
“Endure whichever arises either good or bad.”

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 Kathi Melnic 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.

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STUDY GROUP DISCUSSION NIGHT - 30th March 1999

Covering discourses 2/3/99 - 23/3/99

1. 'Practice all yogas as one' means trying to integrate the bodhicitta mind in all actions that we do. Discuss how we can transform daily activities such as waking, bathing, eating and sleeping into the Mahayana path.
2. What are the seven points in the Seven Point Thought Transformation ?
3. What are the advantages of making sure that you have the right motivation or mental attitude before undertaking any action?
4. How does our state of mind differ between when we are meditating and when we are not?
5. When our situation and circumstances in life are going up or going down, it can be a cause for our faith and effort in our spiritual practice to diminish. What can we do to help ourselves to cultivate good-heartedness towards others and maintain our spiritual practice?
6. In the line 'attain the three principle causes', what are the three principle causes?
7. What are the undeclining attitudes?
8. Why is it important not to speak of the faults of others but instead to point out their good qualities?

Compulsory Question

9. Explain the meaning of the following verse from the Seven Point Thought Transformation text

“There are two duties; at the beginning and end.”

“Endure whatever situation arises, either good or bad.”

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STUDY GROUP TEST

6th April, 1999

Answer any **four** from question no 1-6

Question no 7 is compulsory

Time allowed one hour

1. "Practise all yogas as one". Explain.
2. What are the seven points in the Seven Point Thought Transformation?
3. What are the benefits of cultivating right motivation before undertaking any action?
4. In the line "attain the three principle causes', what are they?
5. What are the three undeclining attitudes?
6. Why is it important not to speak of the faults of others but instead to point out their good qualities?
7. (COMPULSORY)

Explain the meaning of the following lines from the Seven Point Thought Transformation:

"There are two duties, at the beginning and end

Endure whatever situation arises, either good or bad".