

Turning the Wheel of the Dharma

Gen Rinpoche Teaches the Six Perfections

From a teaching given by the Most Venerable Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey at the Dhargyey Buddhist Centre, Dunedin, Sunday 29th May 1994. It has been edited by Ven. Ani Sönam Chökyi from the oral translation by Losang Dawa.

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When we meet here we say many prayers. The first are the prayers of Refuge and Bodhicitta -- generation of the altruistic mind -- directed to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha:

I go for Refuge until the time of my Enlightenment To the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha Community. Through the practice of generosity and the other perfections, May I attain the state of Enlightenment to be able to benefit all sentient beings.

Within the practice of generosity are included the practice of the other perfections--morality, patience, enthusiastic perseverance, concentration and wisdom. The practices of the Bodhisattvas are myriad and vast yet can be subsumed within the practice of these six perfections, from generosity to wisdom.

This morning I will explain the six perfections. Please listen carefully and retain these instructions.

GENEROSITY

In the "Song of Spiritual Experience" Jamgön Lama Tsong Khapa says, "Generosity is like a wish-fulfilling jewel, granting the wishes of all sentient beings," and "Giving is the sharpest sword to cut through the knot of miserliness," and "A person who engages in selfless generosity will gain fame and renown in all the ten directions." (The ten directions are the four cardinal directions--North, South, East and West; the four sub-directions--NE, NW, SE, SW; and above and below.)

Thus Bodhisattvas follow the path of generosity, giving material resources, painstakingly accumulated merits, and even parts of their bodies, to the sentient beings who are needy. The wise follow the path of the practice of generosity.

MORALITY

If a person practises generosity but lives an immoral life, the fruits of generosity will not be enjoyed as a human in their next life. They will not be born as a human or in another higher realm but as a lesser creature such as those of the Naga realms. To enjoy the fruits of generosity in a higher realm there is a need to live an ethical life.

Tsultrim, morality, literally means "moral discipline". The practice of the perfection of morality is described as "The cleansing water washing away the dirt of immoral deeds," and as "The cooling moonlight soothing the pain of those scorched by immoral activities." Morality is strictly guarded by the Bodhisattvas--as strictly as they would protect their own eyes. In a situation where we expect harm we instinctively cover our eyes; in the same way the sublime and holy are meticulous in guarding their morality.

PATIENCE

The third perfection is patience. This is very important because although one may practise generosity and gather immense merit, and practise morality and create the causes for a bright future life, these virtuous causes can be wiped out by a moment of anger.

Zöpa, or the practice of patience, is the supreme ornament adorning the powerful Bodhisattvas. Of all forms of ascetic practice, tolerance or patience is the supreme.

Patience is to anger as the garuda is to the naga. (The garuda is a mythical bird whose main prey is the naga, a serpentine creature.) There is nothing like patience for cooling the heat of anger. Anger is the most destructive of all the delusions because it destroys the goodness collected from all other practices.

When you have the armour-like protection of patience you will not be harmed by external circumstances such as the bad treatment and harsh words directed to you by others, just as a soldier with good armour will not be harmed by spears and arrows in battle.

We need to persevere in developing our practice of patience so that we can remain undisturbed and peaceful at all times. Develop patience as a part of all your practices.

ENTHUSIASTIC PERSEVERANCE

The fourth perfection is the perfection of enthusiastic perseverance. If we have constant diligence and a sense of joyful perseverance in our spiritual practices then our realizations--the deep experiences and understanding gained from our study of the Buddhas' teachings--will increase like the waxing moon.

When you have *tsön.dru*, enthusiastic perseverance or joyful application, all actions of body, speech and mind become meaningful and purposeful. When you have enthusiastic perseverance, whatever virtuous projects you embark upon will be successfully completed. Thus, bearing in mind the benefits of enthusiastic perseverance, we must develop this powerful practice.

CONCENTRATION

The fifth perfection is the perfection of concentration, the king that rules the mind. A person with concentration has control over the mind. A concentrated mind remains unshakeable like the King of Mountains (Mount Meru) that is not moved by even the great winds and forces of destruction.

A mind with single-pointed concentration can be directed to, and remain focused on, any object. For example, the concentrated mind can hold to its object, emptiness, with perfect clarity and continuity undisturbed by extraneous thoughts. A person who develops real calm abiding (a very high level of concentration), generates what is known as physical and mental pliancy and bliss. The great yogis and bodhisattvas persevere meticulously, doing everything that is necessary to cultivate calm abiding and destroy the enemy of distractedness.

WISDOM

The last of the six perfections is the perfection of wisdom. Profound wisdom is the perfect healthy eyes to see the ultimate reality--suchness--of all that exists. It is this wisdom, understanding the ultimate mode of existence of all things, which cuts through the root of cyclic existence. It is the practice most highly acclaimed in all scriptures--the torch dispelling the darkness of ignorance. It is spoken of by the Buddha in many scriptures as the most precious of all qualities.

If there is anyone who is keen to escape ordinary existence they must do all they can to develop this wisdom vision which sees how things actually exist throughout time and space. The practitioner must pursue this path of wisdom with all effort and diligence. It is only in wisdom that the path of deliverance from ordinary existence can be found.

There are beings who have developed the perfect concentration of calm abiding yet have not developed wisdom. Such power of mind, which can remain focused single-pointedly on its object even for aeons, will not lead to the severing of the roots of cyclic existence when wisdom is lacking.

Others, who have developed wisdom but lack concentration and thus cannot focus steadily and continuously on this understanding, also will be unable to cut through the root of ordinary existence. The two together--a mind with perfect understanding, focusing clearly and steadily on the ultimate nature of reality--are needed to sever the roots of ordinary existence.

The "Song of Spiritual Experience" says, "Thus work on developing and increasing this path of combined calm abiding and wisdom."

What I have just explained is very important--the essence of the practice of Bodhisattvas on the path to Enlightenment.

Now meditate, recollecting the six perfections and the part each plays in a person's spiritual growth.