
The Six Perfections

འདྲེན་པ་ཆེན་པོ་སྤྱི་ལ་བསྐྱབ་ཚུལ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

15 October 2019

We will begin with the usual meditation for a few minutes.

[Tonglen meditation]

Now we need to come out of our meditation.

As symbolised by the Buddha's hand mudra of both giving Dharma and meditative equipoise, one of the supreme qualities of a Buddha is to be able to directly and simultaneously engage in the two truths, or the two worlds of appearance and emptiness. Sentient beings lack such an ability. Therefore, we need to come out of meditation to engage in post-meditation activities. Of course, if you want to stay in your meditative state rather than listen to the Dharma you can stay there! But as His Holiness the Dalai Lama says, we should not doze off during meditation.

We have just done the giving and taking meditation to further develop our love and compassion. We all have some sort of interest and try to engage in Dharma practice. So, we want to ensure that our practice is effective and beneficial. Our practice is effective if it helps us to counteract mental afflictions such as pride, desire, jealousy and so forth. If it is not helping us in this regard, it is not effective and not working.

If we do not pay attention to our practice, then there is even a possibility that instead of counteracting mental afflictions, our practice will become another cause for generating mental delusions within us. If this is the case, then the Tibetan saying, 'god descends as a demon', becomes true.

The meditation of giving and taking is not just a matter of reciting a prayer or sitting quietly in a meditative posture. What it actually involves is feeling the suffering and pain that all other sentient beings are undergoing, and cultivating a sense of concern, empathy or compassion for them. As a result of feeling that their suffering is unbearable to contemplate, we generate compassion, genuinely wishing others to be free from suffering. This is how, in this meditation, you mentally take on the suffering of other sentient beings, together with the causes of their suffering. Similarly, reflecting on other sentient beings from the perspective of them being deprived of happiness and joy, we need to feel true love for them, genuinely wishing them to have happiness. So, in this meditation you then mentally give happiness and the causes of happiness, i.e. virtue, to all other beings.

The benefit of cultivating love and compassion within us is an enormous. As we have learnt in the teaching, due to the force of our strong love and compassion we can generate superior intention, which is the direct cause of generating bodhicitta. We can also find that the love and compassion that we generate is the most effective means

of immediately subduing the afflicted, unruly and wild states of mind within us.

When we think about what practice we need to do, and what meditation we need to practise, we always tend to think of something outside of us, some higher practice, something we lack or don't understand. Hence, we fail to understand that our core practice should be working on developing positivity and eliminating the negativity within us, such as developing and perfecting whatever degree of love and compassion we all have. As we were saying before, the benefit of meditating on love and compassion is quite amazing. So, our spiritual practice requires us to focus inward, and recognise whatever positive quality we need to develop and whatever negativity we need to diminish. Once a monk asked his lama, 'Gen Rinpoche, what practice should I do?' The lama replied, 'Safeguard and keep your vow well.'

Last week we touched on the five sciences of knowledge, the first one of which is Buddhist knowledge, which primarily deals with mind training. This mind training is all about counteracting mental afflictions, particularly the root cause of all those afflictions, which is the deluded mind that grasps at an independent self. Ultimately, our Dharma practice is to eliminate that false view of self-grasping.

So, we must make sure that whatever practice we do helps us to minimise mental afflictions. This is very important. We certainly do not want our spiritual practice to become a cause to generate pride, for instance feeling pride in our Dharma knowledge, or animosity towards others or become attached to material goods. When we generate these afflictions, we are supporting and strengthening the force of the self-grasping that is the root of all the mental afflictions.

(vi) How to train in the perfection of wisdom (cont.)

We will now continue with the teaching on the text. We are up to the section on the perfection of wisdom, which talks about the benefits of cultivating wisdom-knowledge. In short, whatever virtuous practice that we engage in must be supported by wisdom-knowledge. Our faith in the Dharma must also be based on wisdom-knowledge. Likewise, in order to fully develop and stabilise love and compassion for other beings, we need the strong support of wisdom-knowledge.

The last few sentences we finished with last week read:

Bodhisattvas depend on wisdom to purify the other five perfections – generosity, etc. Even when they give their flesh to someone who asks for it, they are unaffected by such thoughts as pride, discouragement, etc. It is as though they were taking a cutting from a medicinal plant. This is because their wisdom makes reality manifest. With the wisdom that sees the troubles of both cyclic existence and the peace of nirvana, they accomplish ethical discipline for the sake of others' welfare, so they practice pure ethical discipline.

There is not much need to explain this further, as it is quite self-explanatory. When it says *even when they give their flesh to someone who asks for it, they are unaffected by such thoughts as pride, discouragement*, it is referring to arya bodhisattvas, or bodhisattvas on the spiritual bhumi, or on, or beyond the path of seeing. Actually, giving one's

flesh to someone who asks for it is a profound practice of generosity or giving, it is however not recommended for those who have not attained a spiritual bhumi.

When bodhisattvas do this, as it says here, *they are unaffected by such thoughts as pride, discouragement etc., as though they were taking a cutting from a medicinal plant.* They don't feel any pride about such an extraordinary act of generosity. At the same time, they don't lose their spirit and courage because of any hardship associated with giving the flesh from their body.

As the text clearly says, they can maintain such a high degree of practice *because their wisdom makes reality manifest.* Here *wisdom* refers to their direct realisation of ultimate truth or emptiness. *With the wisdom that sees the troubles of both cyclic existence and the peace of nirvana, they accomplish ethical discipline for the sake of others' welfare* clearly implies that the virtue of this great wisdom of emptiness that they possess also helps them to show the altruistic mental attitude of benefiting others. Because of that wisdom, they also see the faults of samsara as well as the peace of self-liberation.

As the text says, *they accomplish ethical discipline for the sake of others' welfare, so they practise pure ethical discipline.* In other words, their wisdom-knowledge also helps bodhisattvas to develop and practise *pure ethical discipline.*

Then the text continues:

Through wisdom they know the faults of impatience and the merits of patience, and they then discipline their minds so they are not overpowered by suffering and others' misperceptions of them.

This touches on the benefits of wisdom in terms of perfecting the practice of patience. As we all know, it requires a great degree of spirit and courage to be able to tolerate adverse situations or hardship and suffering. Likewise, we have to practise patience with those who cause us harm. The text is saying that due to their wisdom-knowledge, bodhisattvas have a full and thorough understanding of all the benefits of patience and the shortcomings of anger and impatience. As the text says, *through wisdom they know the faults of impatience and the merits of patience, and they then discipline their minds so they are not overpowered by suffering and others' misperceptions of them.* So the wisdom that they develop acts as a remedy to unruly, undisciplined states of mind as well as all misconceptions and discursive thoughts.

Then:

With wisdom they understand well everything at which they joyously persevere, so their perseverance brings great success on the path.

This is clearly saying that when you have a thorough and full understanding of a topic it is easier to put that understanding into practice. In other words, wisdom-knowledge also supports joyful effort.

The text then continues:

And through wisdom based on reasoning they accomplish the supreme delight and bliss of the meditative stabilization that is fixed upon the meaning of reality.

This touches on the benefit of wisdom in terms of achieving the final goal of the perfection of concentration.

Sometimes we get very frustrated with our practice and give it up because we are not able to achieve our goal, or because we are confused with how to practise and so forth. This is all because we lack enough knowledge, and because of that we are unable to maintain a consistent effort in our practice.

As a summary there are these quotes:

The *Compendium of the Perfections* states:

Once bodhisattvas have opened the clear eye of wisdom,
Even when they give their own flesh without a thought,
They never feel high or low about it,
As if they were cutting a medicinal plant.

And also:

Intelligent ones do not practice ethical discipline for their own aims;
They see the flaws in the prison of cyclic existence
And aspire to release the entire world from it.
So of course they do not practice it for mundane aims.

And also:

Injury done to the wise is not harmful
Because they possess the good quality of patience ...

We have already discussed the first of these verses.

Injury done to the wise refers to injury done to bodhisattvas with their intelligence and wisdom-knowledge. As we said before because of their knowledge of the benefits of the practice of patience and the shortcomings of not practising patience bodhisattvas practise patience even towards those who harm them.

So:

Like the best of very tame elephants
Who are patient with many different tasks.
Perseverance by itself ends in exhaustion;
If aided by its ally, wisdom, it achieves great purposes.

Again, this emphasises the importance of wisdom-knowledge in sustaining and developing joyful effort and successfully completing whatever practice one begins. A very well tamed and very strong elephant has the capacity to accomplish great tasks. Likewise, if we develop joyful effort, then we will be able to achieve whatever we want to achieve. However, in order to sustain our joyful effort until we achieve our goal, we also need the support of this wisdom-knowledge. Although this is in reference to our spiritual practice, we also have to understand that it also applies to mundane activities as well. The message here is that we have to utilise our own intelligence and knowledge as much as possible.

Another quote reads:

And also:

How could the supreme delight and bliss of such meditative stabilizations
Be established in the minds of crude people who rely
Upon reasoning that has led them to a wrong path
That is polluted by the great fault of accumulated errors?

Then the text continues:

Two good qualities which may appear to be mutually exclusive prove to be non-contradictory for those who have wisdom.

We will come back to this later. How can there be two things that seem mutually contradictory to those who are ignorant and who lack knowledge, but not contradictory when seen by someone with wisdom-knowledge?

When bodhisattvas have become universal monarchs with authority over the entire world, they still do not fall under the control of sensory objects. This is the power of having wisdom as a royal minister. Similarly, the bodhisattvas' love that views living beings with affection is intense, but it is not mixed with even a trace of attachment; although they have a long-lasting and very forceful compassion that cannot bear for living beings to suffer, they do not have the laziness of being overcome with distress and thereby lacking ...

Here, *wisdom* specifically refers to the wisdom of selflessness or emptiness. Because of their wisdom-knowledge, bodhisattvas are able to develop and maintain a very pure love and compassion that is never affected or polluted by desire or attachment.

Whereas in our case, sometimes our initial love turns into lust and desire. Because of our lack of the wisdom of selflessness we easily grasp at things in the way that they appear to our mind. For example, if a thing appears to our mind as being very attractive, then we mentally grasp at that thing as having that intrinsic quality of attractiveness. Thus, we easily generate attachment to things that appear to be pleasant and attractive and aversion to what appears to be unpleasant and unattractive.

In reality, nothing exists objectively, inherently or independently. Things exist by depending on other things. From this perspective we can understand things are not the way they appear to our mind – they are like an illusion. For bodhisattvas however, the *love that views living beings with affection is intense, but it is not mixed with even a trace of attachment* because they have the wisdom of emptiness.

... although they have a long-lasting and very forceful compassion that cannot bear for living beings to suffer, they do not have the laziness of being overcome with distress and thereby lacking enthusiasm for virtue; they have immeasurable joy, ...

Again, the implication is that because of the support of their wisdom-knowledge, bodhisattvas never become distressed and discouraged while engaging in their compassionate deeds of benefiting other beings. Every opportunity to benefit and please other beings simply brings them more joy. Compassion is a mental attitude that observes and truly feels the pain, suffering and misery of other sentient beings, and truly wishes for them to be free from suffering. It takes a great deal of courage and understanding to be able to put this into practice. I know that some find it too hard to meditate on compassion, saying it stresses them out and makes them feel sad and miserable. As the text says they are *overcome with distress thereby lacking enthusiasm for virtue*. However, this doesn't happen to bodhisattvas with the wisdom of emptiness.

We face a lot of obstacles in our Dharma practice such as becoming bored, losing interest or finding it too hard. All these, I would say, are an indication of some form of laziness or in other words a lack of joyful effort.

However, if we have enough wisdom-knowledge, then we will know the benefits of our practice and there will be no shortage of joyful effort and nothing to distract us from our practice. Then the text continues:

... they have immeasurable joy, but their minds are free of instability which would distract them from their focus;

Bodhisattvas are able to develop *immeasurable joy* in their practice because of their wisdom-knowledge. However, that joy doesn't cause excitement or mental distraction. In our case, we are easily excited by moments of passing joy; with even some small degree of success we easily generate pride and become excited. The text also says that the minds of bodhisattvas *are free of instability which would distract them from their focus*. They have a perfect focus because neither hardship nor joy in their deeds of benefitting other beings can distract their minds from their deeds.

Then:

... and they are continually possessed of great impartiality, but they do not neglect for even a moment the welfare of all living beings.

The Tibetan word *tang.nyom* translated here as 'impartiality' can also be rendered as 'equanimity'. Bodhisattvas *continually possess impartiality or equanimity, but they do not neglect for even a moment the welfare of all living beings*. The implication is that they always possess this great state of equanimity yet at the same time, they are always able to engage in the bodhisattva deeds of benefiting other sentient beings. This is also because of their wisdom-knowledge. Then:

Wisdom does all this, because it is what removes the impediments to achieving a balanced strength in these good qualities [or deeds].

Thus the *Compendium of the Perfections* states:¹

Even bodhisattvas possessed of great kingdoms,
Who have sensory objects similar to divine substances²,
Remain uncorrupted in their very nature.³
This is the power of having the virtue of wisdom as their minister.

Their love, inseparable from helping others,
Is utterly free of stain from attachment.
Their compassion, unable to bear for others to suffer,
Never succumbs to laziness due to the burden of distress.

Possessed of supreme joy, they do not waver from the real.
Their great impartiality never neglects the welfare of beings.
Great wisdom removes all that would counteract
These good qualities, and so it beautifies them.

Matrceta's *Praise in Honor of One Worthy of Honor (Varnarhavarastotra)* also says:

Without rejecting the real nature,
You are also in accord with the conventional.

Thus, you do not have to forsake the real nature that gives great certainty that there is not even an atom of what your cognitive processes apprehend as signs of true existence. And you are also in accord with and do not contradict the

¹ This quotation has been previously discussed.

² This refers to the heavenly sensory pleasures such as beautiful visual forms, sounds, smells etc.

³ Their mind is not stained by that nature.

conventional that gives deep certainty that effects arise from their respective internal and external causes and conditions.

This is one of the hardest parts of the teaching, which is understanding the lack of contradiction between the ultimate truth of emptiness, and the conventional truth of cause and effect. The text says that without giving up the ultimate truth of emptiness, you can posit the truth of cause and effect. As Lama Tsongkhapa put it: the meaning of emptiness is dependent origination, and the meaning of dependent origination is emptiness, and there is no contradiction there. In fact, they complement each other. In other words, saying that things lack inherent existence establishes the infallible truth of cause and effect. Similarly, the truth of cause and effect establishes the view of emptiness. However, to ordinary beings the view of emptiness and the view of cause and effect in everyday life are mutually exclusive or contradictory. They fail to understand the meaning of the conventional world of cause and effect when they delve into the truth of emptiness, and *vice versa*.

As the text says: *you are also in accord with and do not contradict the conventional that gives deep certainty that effects arise from their respective internal and external causes and conditions*. This understanding is possible within the understanding of the truth of emptiness, or how things lack inherent existence. As the text says:

For others these appear to totally exclude each other, but for those who have wisdom, there is compatibility and a lack of contradiction.

The *Praise in Honor of One Worthy of Honor* states:

Regarding your proscriptions and prohibitions,
Some of your word is definitive
While some of it is not,
But between these, there is no contradiction.

The two facts – that there are many dissimilarities in proscriptions and prohibitions between higher and lower vehicles and between sutra and tantra, and that these are all the practices of a single person– ...

Essentially when you look at the Buddha's teachings and the commentaries by later masters in terms of the teachings of the *higher or the lower vehicles* or *sutra and tantra* there seem to be many instances where something is both prohibited and approved. Likewise, the discourses on the two truths – conventional and ultimate truth – may also seem contradictory. In actuality, there is absolutely no contradiction there. All these diverse teachings reflect what a person needs to practise to reach complete enlightenment. However, they:

... are contradictory for those who are confused and lack the power of intelligence to seek the intended meaning of the innumerable scriptures.

Those who lack knowledge, who are ignorant and who lack wisdom, see contradiction in the scriptures and do not understand their intended meaning.

Yet through wisdom the learned know that these are not mutually exclusive.

There are limitless things that the unwise see as contradictory and the wise see as lacking contradiction—the presentations of the two truths and the many prescriptions in one scripture that are prohibitions in others and vice versa.

To say that wisdom distinguishes the non-contradictory, intended meaning behind them is the peerless praise of wisdom.

This is emphasising that those who possess the right kind of wisdom do not see any contradiction in the diversity of the teachings that the Buddha has given. The kind of wisdom that they possess is called the supreme or *peerless wisdom*.

Then the text says:

In short, all good qualities come from wisdom. The *Compendium of the Perfections* says:

How wondrous that such excellent things come from wisdom
That is like a mother who loves her child.

The ten powers of the sugata, most excellent of strengths;
All superior activities, without parallel;
And all other collections of virtues in their entirety
Arise based on such wisdom as their cause.

The arts and the best treasures in all worlds;
The variety of sacred learning that is like an eye;
Protections, awarenesses, mantras, and so on;
The different attributes of the teachings that set these forth;

The multitude of enumerations; and the doors to liberation;
All such types of service to the world
That display the great power of the conqueror's children,
All arise from the power of wisdom.

We will leave tonight's teaching here.

Next the text will talk about the benefit of wisdom and following that the faults of not having wisdom.

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

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As usual we begin with a short meditation, and with a proper motivation. [*Tonglen meditation*]

There's tremendous benefit in learning about meditation practice and engaging in it regularly. Meditation practice helps us to achieve mental happiness. As we all seek lasting happiness, that's the kind of happiness we need. So, it is important that we understand that meditation practice is an effective means to enhance mental happiness. Then, we will really appreciate its benefits and will be motivated to put it into practice.

We've heard a lot about the benefit of meditation practice in subduing the mind and making the mind more manageable, workable or serviceable. What does subduing or controlling the mind mean? Effectively, it means not letting the mind be overpowered by mental delusions or afflictions.

So, subduing the mind means eliminating mental afflictions. Once mental afflictions are overcome, we will have subdued our mind and gained control over it. We can understand this in the context of everyday life: when our mind is overpowered by mental afflictions, we go through unhappiness, pain and suffering. On the other hand, when our mind is free of mental afflictions and filled with calmness and happiness, we will find ourselves to be truly in a good and happy mood.

Obviously, if our mind is filled with too many external distractions and discursive thoughts, we can't have a calm and happy mind, because there is just no room at that time for happiness to occupy our mind. So, the only way we can find or enhance mental happiness is by getting rid of those discursive thoughts and creating a space for peace and happiness in our mind.

We need to understand that inner happiness is essential for our general wellbeing. For example, some people are used to occupying their minds with various disturbing thoughts. If they go on like this for a long time and don't find any mental rest, it could have a serious impact on their life. They might end up feeling frustrated, confused and even depressed.

So, through utilising our wisdom-knowledge, we can understand the benefits of practising meditation, such as in recognising those states of mind that are beneficial and those that are harmful, purifying negativities and defilements, and bringing positive changes in our mental continuum.

Generally, our valuation of things as being either good or bad is based on external objects, or something obvious to our perception. But, through wisdom, we can also observe things within our mind. Just as with external objects, we can recognise within us forces that are positive or negative. Once we identify and recognise these, our task is to enhance the positive forces and habituate ourselves with them and develop a positive state of mind.

It is said that if we think of the various mental traits, we will note that positive traits can be developed inexhaustibly. This

means that if we put in the effort, any positive quality within our mind can be infinitely developed.

However, there's a limit to the development and training of our body. As we age, our body decays and loses strength. We also know that, no matter how physically fit or agile an athlete can be, there is always a limit to what she or he can do. For example, if you are attempting a high jump, there's a limit to how high you can jump. But when it comes to acquiring and developing mental qualities and knowledge, even if we start at a late age – for example, after we turn sixty – we can still achieve a lot. We know of many people who have gone back to study at a late age and have been very successful in completing their courses. This is good news for us – when it comes to enhancing our inner values and qualities, we have more time, space and scope to strive for them.

Initially, it's important to recognise the need to shift our focus from looking outward to inward, in terms of knowing what's of value or of no value. Our usual focus is just looking outward – the things that we desire or believe to be the source of happiness, for example, are securing a good job and saving plenty of money. And when we talk about 'excellent qualities', we usually think of them in terms of external objects or visible qualities – such as a good external education, skills and living conditions. But while these things are good to have, we are saying here that these alone are not enough; we also need to cultivate good internal qualities. So we must initially direct our focus inward, specifically to our mind, and recognise the positive and negative forces within the mind.

Simply knowing what is good and bad from an external perspective is not a difficult task; anyone can do it. We can talk about education in terms of worldly or secular education, and spiritual or Dharma education. Of course, both are important and beneficial; we need both to go hand-in-hand in our lives. Worldly education mainly focuses on achieving external success, in terms of gaining qualifications, securing a well-paid job, and so on.

But, as I said before, external success alone is not enough for us to secure happiness and live a meaningful life. Worldly education and success must be complemented by spiritual progress. If we lose sight of spiritual practice and inner values, it's highly possible that our worldly success may even add to our problems, rather than solving them and bringing us more happiness and satisfaction.

When we undermine our inner values, what can happen is that the more external success and progress we make in life, the more our mental afflictions and defilements – such as pride, jealousy, competitiveness, and despising or belittling others – will increase. And the more mental afflictions we have in our mind, the more stress, tension, conflict and suffering we will experience in our life. The outcome will be that, in the end, whatever external progress we make due to our exertion and efforts will not bring us the happiness we seek, and our life will become meaningless.

So, we also need to make progress in terms of spiritual knowledge and practice. When we engage in spiritual practice, our goal is to counteract the mental defilements, such as pride, hatred and jealousy. Because these are the main enemy or obstacles to our spiritual practice, we need to recognise them as such, and direct our practice towards counteracting them. The more progress a spiritual practitioner makes in their practice, the more happiness they will find.

So, while we need to recognise the benefit of worldly education and success, at the same time, we need to understand the importance of integrating spiritual practice in our life. In short, we must try to do well both in our worldly and spiritual ventures.

Of course, when we engage in Dharma practice, it's important that our motivation is not corrupted – for example, learning Dharma to become famous, or to receive gifts, admiration or praise from others. If we do this, even though we may think we are engaging in Dharma practice, the 'Dharma' we practise will become a poison for us. Mental afflictions such as jealousy and pride make no discrimination in terms of whom they afflict; regardless of whether they are believers or non-believers, those who generate these afflictions in their mind, will lose their peace and happiness and will suffer.

The great Indian Buddhist master, Vasubandhu, said that we should not teach Dharma out of any of the mental afflictions, and that we should teach it perfectly in accord with the meaning of the sutras and commentaries. So, when teaching Dharma, we should not be biased in terms of highly esteeming our own view and holding animosity towards the views of others. That would be going against our Dharma practice.

(vi) How to train in the perfection of wisdom (cont.)

We will continue with the text:

The faults of not having wisdom ...

This specifically refers to the wisdom of emptiness. When the text says, *the faults of not having wisdom*, it sounds like there are beings who do not have wisdom. But there are no such beings. All beings possess some degree of wisdom. So the statement *the faults of not having wisdom* refers to those who possess so little knowledge, it's as if their little knowledge is equivalent to not having wisdom.

The faults of not having wisdom are as follows. Without wisdom, generosity and the other perfections are as if blind.

We came across the same point previously. Of the six perfections, the perfection of wisdom is considered to be like an eye, without which the other five perfections are blind, without a guide. Therefore, when we talk about making progress in the practice of giving, for example, technically that comes down to the *thought* of giving; this is defined as the meaning of giving. But developing the thought of giving depends on knowing the benefits of practising giving on the one hand – that is, finding wealth in the future, etc. – and the shortcomings of stinginess on the other. It is wisdom that enables us to know the benefits of giving and the shortcomings of stinginess.

So, to motivate ourselves in the practice of giving, we can see how the development of this practice very much depends on increasing our wisdom.

Similarly, we can understand the significant role of wisdom when we engage in and develop the other perfections of moral ethics, patience, joyful effort and meditative concentration. Developing all five perfections depends on developing wisdom.

For example, we can look at the perfection of joyful effort; by definition, this is the thought that takes joy or delight in engaging in virtuous practice. However, cultivating a positive inspiration to engage in practice depends on our understanding of the practice we are doing.

Likewise, if we are engaging in meditation, we need to have the wisdom to be able to recognise all the challenges we may face, and understand how to overcome all these challenges in order to make progress. Therefore again, it's obvious that this depends on wisdom-knowledge.

The text continues:

The Verse Summary of the Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines states:

How could billions of blind people without a guide,
Who do not know the way, enter the city?

The analogy here is of a blind person who, in order to get to the correct destination, must depend on a guide. Without a guide, the blind person could not even see what is right in front of them, let alone the way to get to a distant city or town.

Once these five perfections lack wisdom, they are blind;

This refers to how, without wisdom, the other five perfections are like the blind person.

As they lack a guide, they cannot reach enlightenment.

The text continues:

Consequently, generosity and the other perfections do not become pure, and you do not find the correct view.

The implication here is that how even generosity, without the support of wisdom, may end up as a cause for rebirth in cyclic existence. When it says, *do not become pure*, that's what it means, *and you do not find the correct view*.

The Compendium of the Perfections states:

If those intent upon the final fruit are without wisdom,
Their generosity does not purify them. The Buddha said,
"Giving for others' sake is supreme generosity."
Other kinds of giving serve only to increase one's wealth.

This clearly shows the benefit of wisdom. For example, engaging in the practice of giving without wisdom doesn't yield much of a result. As it says here, *other kinds of giving serve only to increase one's wealth* – so this type of giving only brings a small benefit. This is like depositing your money in a savings account; the only profit you will make is the interest, which will be hardly anything. On the other hand, if you invested the money in a different financial venture, you could make a lot more profit. Similarly, if we direct our practice of giving towards the cause of achieving enlightenment then, as it says here, such a practice becomes *supreme generosity*.

The text continues:

And also:

Ethical discipline does not become pure
Unless wisdom's light dispels the darkness.
Ethical discipline without wisdom usually
Becomes sullied by afflictions through faulty
understanding.

As mentioned before, wisdom in the context of the practice of giving is important; but it's also important in the practice of ethical discipline. Without it, we cannot develop a good ethical practice. The text says *unless wisdom's light dispels the darkness* – wisdom's light enables us to see the benefit of practising ethical discipline, and the downfall of not practising ethics, and so forth. Without wisdom, our mind would be darkened by ignorance and delusion. Therefore, we wouldn't be able to engage in pure ethical discipline.

The text continues:

And also:

If your mind is muddled by the fault of erring intelligence,
You have no interest in keeping the virtue of patience,
You maintain a dislike for weighing merit and fault,
And are like an unworthy king who becomes famous.

Again, the text shows the need for wisdom in developing the practice of patience as well.

And also:

For adepts, wisdom is lauded as foremost;
Nothing else is as subtle or profound.
Without wisdom, you do not head straight for the mental path
That is unclouded by the defects of desire.

So, for adepts, wisdom is lauded as foremost – here, referring to the wisdom of emptiness – and nothing else is as subtle – there’s nothing more subtle or profound than this wisdom. Then, without wisdom, you do not head straight for the mental path, that is unclouded by the defects of desire – in other words, you won’t be able to achieve the perfect state of mind of an enlightened being.

The text continues:

And also:

Without maintaining joyous perseverance in wisdom’s ways,
Your view will not become pure.

Here, the “king who becomes famous” refers to an unworthy king for whom fame occurs once, but then declines.

Here, Lama Tsongkhapa illustrates how, without wisdom, your practice of the other perfections would become like that of an unworthy king.

The text continues:

You do not repel the darkness of delusion’s confusion as long as wisdom’s great light does not shine, but when it does, you cast away the darkness, so you must make an effort to generate wisdom with whatever capacity and strength you have.

The *Compendium of the Perfections* says:

Like the dawning of the sun’s great light,
The enormous power of wisdom’s light arises
And the concealing darkness in beings’ minds
Is completely dispelled, only its name left behind.

Earlier, I was talking about how our mind is filled with discursive thoughts due to ignorance and delusions; these completely overshadow our mind, to the point where there’s no room for happiness or wisdom to arise. However, when wisdom, like the dawning of the sun’s great light, enters our mind, all this darkness is gone, completely dispelled, only its name left behind.

The text continues:

And also:

Therefore, with all the power at your disposal,
Work hard at the methods for producing such wisdom.

The advice here is that we must try to relate these instructions to ourselves – to see how our mind is filled with the darkness of ignorance, and that the only difference between our mind and the mind of the Buddha is that the Buddha’s mind has given rise to wisdom. It is saying here that if we strive and put an effort into developing wisdom, we can also develop this wisdom, and through that, be able to clear away ignorance.

The text continues:

What are the causes of confusion? ...

This relates to what was just mentioned about clearing away confusion or delusions in our mind to pave the way for wisdom to arise. So *what are the causes of confusion?*

... They are relying on bad friends; ...

There’s no real need to explain this. What is required here is that we focus on each of the causes mentioned, and think about whether they are true. So *relying on bad friends* is considered one of the causes, as well as *laziness; indolence; oversleeping*; etc.

They are relying on bad friends; laziness; indolence; oversleeping; taking no pleasure in analysis and discernment; lack of interest in the vast variety of phenomena; the pride of thinking “I know” when you do not; the major wrong views; ...

Generating *wrong views* can also impede our cultivation of wisdom.

... and being discouraged and thinking, ...

This refers to putting oneself down, and feeling discouragement or low self-esteem, thinking:

... “Someone like me cannot do this,” and thus not taking pleasure in relying upon the learned.

These are all causes of confusion. As a summary, there’s a quote from the *Compendium of the Perfections*.

The *Compendium of the Perfections* says:

Laziness, indolence, and reliance upon bad friends,
Being governed by sleep, no feeling for discernment,
No interest in the Sage’s most sublime wisdom,
Inquiring under the influence of false pride,

Lacking the faith to rely upon learned persons
Due to attachment to self from feelings of inadequacy,
The great poison of false concepts which are wrong views
These are the causes of confusion.

The text continues:

Therefore, as the *Compendium of the Perfections* says:

Serve and venerate a guru worthy of trust,
And study to achieve wisdom.

We need to focus on every word of this teaching: for example, when it says, *worthy of trust*, the implication is that you must not follow someone who is unworthy or unqualified. *And study to achieve wisdom* means that after relying on such gurus who are worthy of trust, one must study well, and develop an understanding of the Dharma.

The text continues:

Once you rely on a learned person, you must study in accord with your capacity, for if you do not, you will not produce the wisdom that arises from study and the wisdom that arises from reflection, ...

In Lama Tsongkhapa’s writings, we find this emphasis of combining study, contemplation and meditation together in an orderly manner over and over again. Cultivating the wisdom arising from meditation depends on cultivating the wisdom arising from contemplation, and this in turn depends on the wisdom arising from studying. The three must go hand-in-hand, in the sense that the focus of the three is the same. In our practice, we must contemplate what we study, and meditate on what we contemplate. So, initially, studying the Dharma well, and gaining the wisdom or understanding of the Dharma is vitally important for effective contemplation and meditation, and for further deepening and developing our wisdom.

... whereupon you will not know what to meditate upon.

Again the glorious Aryasura says:

Little study is like blindness – you do not know how to meditate.

Without study, what could there be to reflect upon?

Therefore, from the cause of making an effort to study

You meditate in accord with reflection and thereby gain vast wisdom.

The venerable Maitreya also says in the *Sublime Continuum*:

The conceptualizations of the three spheres
Are asserted to be cognitive obscurations,
While conceptualizations such as stinginess and the like
Are asserted to be afflictive obscurations.

Solely wisdom is the cause
Of their elimination, nothing else,
So wisdom is supreme. Study is its basis,
So study is supreme.

These verses emphasise how important it is to study the Dharma well, because the knowledge you gain through study lays the foundation for contemplation and meditation, which is necessary for deepening and increasing our wisdom, and thereby dispelling all ignorance and obscurations.

The first verse above from the *Sublime Continuum* is one of the main sources used in presenting the two types of obscurations – the obstructions to an omniscient mind, and afflictive obscurations – in the Mahamudra teachings.

When we take the meaning of the above verse literally, in terms of defining the two obscurations, it accords well with the Svatantrika-Madhyamaka view, but does not accord with the Prasangika-Madhyamaka view. However, the *Sublime Continuum* presents the teaching in accordance with the Prasangika view. It is said that, although the master Asanga was recognised as the founder of the Mind Only (Cittamatin) school, the commentary he wrote on the *Sublime Continuum* shows that he truly was a proponent of the Prasangika-Madhyamaka school. His Holiness the Dalai Lama interprets the above verse by saying that, even though the text uses the words *conceptualizations of the three spheres*, the implication is that it is the latency or tendency of the *conceptualization of the three spheres* that is an obstruction to omniscient mind or cognitive obscuration. Then *conceptualizations such as stinginess and the like are asserted to be afflictive obscurations*.

The words *solely wisdom is the cause of their elimination, nothing else* emphasise wisdom as the main remedy to both obscurations. *So wisdom is supreme. Study is its basis*. Having emphasised wisdom, the text then says that, in order to gain wisdom, it is necessary for us to study it well. Therefore, as it emphasises, studying is also supreme.

Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson

Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine

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Edited Version

The Six Perfections

འཇུག་ཐོབ་ཆེན་པོ་སྤྱི་ལ་བསྐྱབ་ཚུལ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

29 October 2019

We will begin with the usual meditation.

[meditation]

Try to cultivate your motivation for receiving the teaching. The best motivation is to generate the bodhicitta mind; however, if you are not able to generate the bodhicitta mind simply think that listening to this Dharma teaching is to benefit other beings.

Prior to undertaking any activity, it is very beneficial to keep our focus on the intention of whatever activity we undertake. Whatever activity we do, whether it is in accord with a bodhisattva's deeds or not, depends on our motivation. If our motivation when we engage in activities like eating, sleeping, walking or sitting is to benefit other beings, then these activities will be positive and resemble bodhisattva deeds. It is good to get used to that habit of giving a bit of thought to our motivation ahead of undertaking any action. Normally we just go ahead with whatever we have to do, without any thought about why we are engaging in those actions. As a result, the consequences of our actions are rendered meaningless. Hence, correcting our motivation or intention makes a huge difference to the efficacy of our actions.

If we are able to ensure that whatever action we do is aimed at benefiting other beings, we are automatically avoiding causing harm to others. In other words, our actions will bring happiness and no harm to others. Just as we admire and revere those who are always very caring and who benefit others and never harm them, others will also admire and like us if we follow their example in loving and caring for other beings.

(b') How to begin the generation of wisdom

At the end of last week's teaching, we stopped at this quote from Maitreya:

The venerable Maitreya also says in the *Sublime Continuum*:

The conceptualizations of the three spheres
Are asserted to be cognitive obscurations,
While conceptualizations such as stinginess and the like
Are asserted to be afflictive obscurations.

As we noted last week, when we take the line mentioning the two types of obscurations – the cognitive obstructions to the omniscient mind and the afflictive obscurations – literally, then it accords with the view of Svatantrika-Madhyamaka school in which *cognitive obscurations* refers to the conception of a self in the context of truly existent self of phenomena. While *conceptualisations such as stinginess and the like* refers to the conception of the substantially existent self in the sense of self-sufficiency and mental afflictions as afflictive obscurations. According to the Svatantrika-Madhyamikas the conception of the self of a person is an afflictive obscuration and the conception of a truly existent self of phenomena is a cognitive obscuration and an obstruction to omniscience. However, according to Prasangika-Madhyamaka school cognitive obscurations or obstructions to omniscience are not identified with any

types of conception. Rather, they point to the latency left by self-grasping or the conception of an inherent self. So when it says, *conceptualisations of three spheres are asserted to the cognitive obscurations*, we have to interpret that as referring to the latency of the conception of the self. Next:

Solely wisdom is the cause
Of their elimination, nothing else
So wisdom is supreme.

As clearly indicated here, the antidote that counteracts and uproots both types of obscurations, is *solely wisdom*. Only wisdom is the cause of their elimination. Since only wisdom has the capacity to uproot and eliminate both types of obscurations, *wisdom is supreme*. And on the basis of that:

Study is its basis,
So study is supreme.

Gaining such wisdom is dependent on wisdom itself, so *studying* this wisdom is both *supreme* and wisdom in itself. Studying or listening to the Dharma is really the supreme cause to gain wisdom. We can also interpret *study is supreme* to mean that studying is the supreme cause giving rise to wisdom.

The text continues:

And Santideva's *Compendium of the Trainings in Verse* (*Siksha-samuccaya-karika*) says:

Be forbearing and then study;
Stay in a forest, and then
Persevere at meditative equipoise.

This passage from the *Compendium of the Trainings* contains very important spiritual advice; it emphasises the importance of carefully studying the Dharma. To emphasise this the verse says, *Be forbearing and then study*. We need to try to overcome hardship and feeling weary, which requires great diligence and effort. So we should study well.

The advice is to *stay in a forest and then persevere at meditative equipoise*. When you are equipped through your study, go to a forest or place of solitude and deepen your understanding by engaging in meditation practice. This is very important because quite often we undermine our intention to gain a sound understanding and knowledge through studying. For example, sometimes without preparing well, people go to do a meditation retreat, and when they start, they don't know what to practice and then have to seek help from others about what they should meditate on. Or they intend to accumulate mantras, but they are not sure which mantra they should be accumulating.

We find here some very clear and structured advice on how we should go about our spiritual practice. The advice here makes good sense. It says that we should initially gain a good knowledge of the Dharma through studying it well. The next stage is contemplating and analysing what we have learnt. Since we have gained a degree of knowledge, we naturally have enough Dharma points to contemplate. Through contemplating and analysing, our knowledge becomes much deeper and more thorough. And after that we meditate to fully habituate ourselves with what we have contemplated. Since we have gained a definitive ascertainment of the Dharma through contemplation, we will know the subject of our meditation.

Then the text continues

His auto-commentary [*Compendium of Trainings*] to this says:

With impatience, you become disheartened and cannot forbear, so your perseverance at study, etc., declines.

This is emphasising that we should have enough patience to accept any hardship and difficulties we face in learning and studying the Dharma. If we lack the patience to overcome all the challenges that we face in our study then, as it says, we will easily lose our motivation and therefore won't be able to achieve any results.

Without study, you do not have the means for either meditative stabilization or for clearing away afflictions. Therefore, without becoming disheartened, study.

As discussed earlier, if we lack enough Dharma knowledge gained through studying and listening to the Dharma, then we lack knowledge about meditation itself as well as how to apply the remedies for overcoming mental afflictions. Essentially the text is also saying that without a background of good knowledge of the Dharma you won't be able to contemplate and meditate effectively.

And the *Questions of Narayana Formula (Narayana-pariprccha-dharani)* also says:

Just so, child of good lineage, if you study, wisdom will come. If you are possessed of wisdom, the afflictions will be stilled. Once you have no afflictions, demons do not have a chance with you.

Again, this is saying that wisdom arises from listening to and studying the Dharma, and with this wisdom we will be able to overcome the mental delusions or afflictions. Then, having overcome the mental delusions there will be no more interferences. Here the text is referring to the four types of demons or evil forces (*maras*) of delusion, aggregates, the lord of death, and the godly son.

Sometimes people complain that they receive harm from this or that, but these harms are nothing other than the mental delusions that lie within them.

Scripture and reasoning establish the following: Those who wish to properly practice the teaching need a broad study of the stainless scriptures and their commentaries, the unexcelled cause that gives rise to the wisdom which thoroughly distinguishes phenomena, which is the sacred life-force of the path.

Here, the *study of the stainless scriptures* refers to the sutras or words of the Buddha while *their commentaries* refers to the *shastra* or treatises on the sutras by the later masters. The text is saying that the knowledge that you can gain through learning the Dharma is the *sacred life-force of the path*, which refers to the knowledge and wisdom that you produce through listening to and studying the Dharma.

However, not achieving wisdom while thinking that a broad study is necessary to develop it is simply the fault of your not being convinced that you need the analytical meditation of discerning wisdom when the time comes for practice, and of having the mistaken conviction that thinks that analytical meditation is not necessary. Therefore, those of you who want what is best for yourselves should eliminate such a mistaken conviction as though getting rid of poison.

Knowledge can be gained through relying on the authentic scriptures as well as through applying one's own discriminating wisdom. The text is saying that it is a great mistake to think that it is not necessary to gain such knowledge in order to practice the Dharma or to meditate.

Nal-jor-ba-chen-bo said:

Jo-wo-pa (Jo-bo-ba), when it comes to accomplishing the state of omniscient enlightenment, whether you show off or conceal that you studied only a handbook, you cannot get anywhere without reading a yak's load of books.

What it is saying here is that it is not sufficient to study a small number of books that you can carry in your hand; you need to study a load of books that would require a yak to carry.

Pu-chung-wa (Phu-chung-ba) placed an opened sacred text beside his pillow and said:

We must learn the texts, so even though you do not get a chance to read them, make a wish to read them all. If someone said that you should practice the teaching without understanding it, how would you do it?

The Kadampa master Pu-chang-wa always kept an open book next to his pillow to make it easily accessible to read whenever he could. *Make a wish to them all, if someone said that you should practice the teaching without understanding it, how would you do it?* Having a text nearby makes it easy to be able to refer to it. Many great lamas keep important texts next to them, some of them opened. The late Geshe Ngawang Dhargye always had the *Eight Thousand Lines Sutra* placed open next to him. Then, every time he got an opportunity, he would read a few pages, and in this way, he read the sutra over two hundred times.

Then the text continues:

Bo-do-wa said three times to a monk of Jen-nga-wa (sPyan-sngaba) who was escorting him a short distance, "You are enjoying yourself too much." He then continued:

You rely upon my teacher who is like the sky covering the earth...

This implies the enormity of the excellent qualities that are possessed by Bo-dowa's teacher.

... so do not salivate over other teachers. Since you do not have to read the root texts and their commentaries and mark their corresponding passages, you do not have a lot of work. You are happy because you do not think about cause and effect, while you work at certain activities by means of certain tantric practices. And you can be satisfied with these many things?

Sha-ra-wa said:

Until you become a buddha, your studies are not finished. They are finished when you are a buddha.

Ga-ma-pa (Ka-ma-ba) said:

Some say, "When you practice the teachings, what need is there of knowledge," and they degenerate. This idea is a real danger for those of us who have studied little. Others say, "If you really try you do not need knowledge." This is very dangerous. If you are making a big effort at the teaching, knowledge is required; since it is not completed in this brief lifetime, we must resolve, "I will study continually through many lifetimes without interrupting the succession of lives having leisure and opportunity." Some think that meditators do not need to study, only those who explain the teachings do. But those who explain the teachings and do not study merely run the risk of sinning, while it is precisely the meditator who must study to avoid straying from the path.

These lines also emphasise the importance of learning and studying the Dharma. When we think about it, we either need to learn or there is no need to learn about the path – there is no third option – and we fit into the category of those who need to learn.

As the text says, *I will study continually through many lifetimes without interrupting the succession of lives having leisure and opportunity*. This says that if we don't finish learning in this life, we need to continue it in a future life or until we

achieve our final goal. Therefore, we need to ensure that we uninterruptedly find a suitable life to continue our learning, such as a human life of leisure and endowment.

The text then says, *some think that meditators do not need to study, only those who explain the teachings do.* This happens. We hear of people saying that it is not necessary to study in order to engage in meditation practice; they think studying is only necessary if you are giving teachings to others. This gives rise to the notion that the intention of those who study and learn the Dharma is to teach to others. Then, through not actually putting the Dharma into practice they risk creating sinful actions. The text warns against this by saying, *those who explain the teaching and do not study merely run the risk of sinning. It is precisely the meditator who must study to avoid straying from the path* indicates how, without the knowledge of the Dharma, you won't know what to practice and could easily follow the perverted path.

The text continues:

Thus you must be convinced that wisdom and the study that causes it are indispensable for proper practice. Moreover, unless you reach certainty about the need for analytical meditation when you practice, you will have a very hard time getting anywhere.

Even some well-regarded scholars of the scriptural collections claim, "Understand study to be either a mere preliminary to practice or to be a background support-like mountains at the back of a valley-but not the actual instructions. For this reason, you need practice to quickly attain buddhahood and study to benefit the Buddha's teaching." This is contradictory nonsense. There are just two kinds of teaching: teaching as scripture and teaching that has been put into practice; the former makes known the procedures for practice, and the latter is assimilating the practice after you have understood the procedures. Therefore, doing the practice without error is the best way to uphold the teaching. Moreover, unerringly upholding the teaching in the sense of practice depends upon an unerring understanding of scriptural teaching.

Therefore, it is not right to forget what you have studied at the time of practice, for you must first know many teachings and then put their very meaning into practice when the time comes to do so. Even if you do not understand the teachings from the outset, do not be discouraged, but strive to study them in accord with your mental capacity, as much as feasible, whether that be a little or a lot. Do not make study and practice into separate things. Rather, the very thing that you practice must be exactly what you first study and reflect upon. Beginning bodhisattvas must depend with certainty on a single procedure of the path - a practice that is not biased toward one side but is complete in all aspects of the path. When their mental capacity is small, they engage in conditioning themselves to just this process of study followed by practice. If their mental capacity is great or, though at first small, has become greater through conditioning, they steadily expand upon the very stage of the path they know, proceeding in connection with all the scriptures and their stainless commentaries. There is no need for them to pursue something else to study besides these. If their mental capacity is great or, though at first small, has become greater through conditioning, they steadily expand upon the very stage of the path they know, proceeding in connection with all the scriptures and their stainless commentaries. There is no need for them to pursue something else to study besides these.

Therefore if instructions are accurate and complete, then, although summarized, all of the key points of the sutra and tantra paths and the paths of the higher and lower vehicles

must be covered; once they have been explained at length, you must be able go through all the teachings. Until you reach something like this, it is possible to feel delight about just some portion of your practice, but it is impossible to become certain about the key points of practice for the complete corpus of the teachings.

Consequently, rely upon excellent teachers and companions. Make a foundation of pure ethical discipline to which you commit yourself. Listen again and again to the instructions, do four sessions of meditation, and then sustain the object of meditation and its subjective aspects. After you have made fervent supplications to the deities and gurus, strive at all the causes of engaging from many perspectives in accumulating the collections and purifying obscurations. If you do this, you will become profoundly certain that the good qualities in your mind will steadily improve. If you do this, you will become profoundly certain that the good qualities in your mind will steadily improve.

After that the text explains the indication of progress in following this practice. It says:

As the former excellent beings said:

Make all the teachings you have previously heard completely clear in your mind. You must reflect upon them again and again, evaluate them, and deliberate on them. When you have let yourself forget the teachings, there is nothing gained by learning to stabilize your attention on one object of meditation. The best meditators are the best teachers. Mediocre meditators become mediocre teachers.

Again, this is emphasising that in your meditation you focus on what you have contemplated or what you have studied. Then your meditation deepens and increases your understanding. In summary, *the best meditators are the best teachers. Mediocre meditators become mediocre teachers.*

Finally:

You need knowledge of the teaching and commensurate meditation that both proceed to ever greater levels together.

Once you gain a firm certainty from such reflection, you do not pay heed when bad friends say, "All thoughts, virtuous and non-virtuous, are conceptualizations and are therefore to be eliminated," but rather think, "The teachings do not say this nor do my teachers assert it." Otherwise, if you are a person who possesses a little faith but no wisdom, you are like the leading edge of water running downhill - you go anywhere you are led, taking anything said to be true, wanting to cry when you see others crying, wanting to laugh when you see others laugh.

We will now recite the *King of Prayers* and dedicate it to Bernii's mother who passed away last week. Many of you know that Bernii has been giving a lot to the centre through her voluntary work for the centre. She is also a very long-term student and a part of the publication team. She is very intelligent, loving and kind-hearted person.

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
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Edited Version*

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The Six Perfections

འབྲུག་གི་ཐུགས་རྒྱུ་ལ་བསྐྱབ་ཚུལ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

5 November 2019

As usual, we begin with the meditation.

[*Tong-len meditation*]

So everyone, please try to cultivate the bodhicitta motivation.

As a result of studying the Dharma, we have within us some Dharma knowledge, such as knowledge about bodhicitta. This knowledge of bodhicitta is like a seed of bodhicitta within us. Therefore, what we need to do in our practice is to nurture this seed so that it will develop into bodhicitta.

This seed of Dharma, or whatever knowledge we have of the Dharma, is a basis for our practice and our potential to be able to benefit other beings and avoid causing them harm.

To benefit others and avoid harming them, it is not enough just to engage in a sitting meditation and imagine 'giving and taking'. We must also put this meditation into practice in our everyday life. In our meditation practice, we know that we are training our mind in giving and taking so that other beings are free from suffering and endowed with happiness. Therefore, it is vitally important that we try to benefit others in our everyday life, to the best of our ability. For example, if we come across a being who lacks joy and happiness, then we should do our best to bring happiness to that being, in whatever way we can, with the capacity and resources we have.

Similarly, if we observe a being who is afflicted with suffering, then again, we should try to help that being overcome their problems in whatever way we can, to the best of our ability. Therefore, the aim or purpose of meditation practice is not just to simply sit in an upright posture, but to apply our meditation in our daily actions and, as much as possible, actively benefit others by bringing them happiness and solving their problems, thereby making our lives meaningful.

Initially, our sense of empathy or mental intention to help others is lacking, and we are not habituated to the practice of giving and taking, so it doesn't even occur to us to help others who are in need. Therefore, it is necessary for us to train our mind to be compassionate and kind to others through engaging in practices such as the meditation of giving and taking. We can tell from our own experience that the kinds of actions we do primarily depends on the type of mental impulses within us. If we are mentally habituated to strong compassion and love towards others, then naturally we will benefit others, unconditionally and joyfully, to the best of our ability and in whatever way we can in order to provide them with happiness or to eradicate their problems. However, if our mind lacks habituation with compassion and love towards others, then, even if there is a need to benefit others and we have the capacity and resources, we won't reach out to them.

What we are trying to say here is that, when we talk about developing love and compassion and benefitting other beings through actual deeds, we will find it very hard in the

beginning. However, if we keep engaging in meditation practice, and familiarise ourselves step by step with it by making a consistent effort, we will eventually generate and develop true love and compassion for other beings; and then acts of altruism will come about naturally.

Love and compassion doesn't mean observing the suffering of others with our own eyes. Rather, we need to feel it in our heart and reach out to them in our actions; relieving them from suffering and providing them with happiness. As mentioned before, what is important is to diligently train our mind and actions by making gradual, step-by-step progress with our practice. For example, initially we train our love through giving small objects that others are in need of and relieve them from small problems. or help them in some small way.

You have studied the practice of giving quite extensively, so it is very important that you put your knowledge into practice by cultivating and habituating your mind with the thought of giving, and trying to be generous to those in need according to your capacity and resources. Essentially, we should know that the benefit of cultivating love and compassion for ourselves and others and for society, is unbelievable in terms of enhancing peace, happiness and harmony. We can also say that all the problems and harm that people cause each other is because of the lack of care and compassion.

According to Lama Tsongkhapa, benefitting others is only possible if there is the loving kindness of wishing others to have happiness, and the compassion of wishing them to be free of suffering. Recently there was shocking coverage on TV news about the abuse of aged residents and patients by nurses and care workers. You would have seen it. When I saw it, I couldn't imagine how people could do such harmful things to those who are frail and most in need of support. These workers were paid by the government to take good care of these people. I was quite disturbed to see such inhumane treatment where the patients were being beaten or having food shoved aggressively into their mouth etc. This is a clear sign of the decadence of society and is very sad. Now again, if you look into the cause of why people do such very mean and harmful things to others, it is because of the decline of loving kindness and compassion within them.

We are up to the division of wisdom which has many parts.

(c') The divisions of wisdom

The presentation of wisdom has three parts:

1. Wisdom that knows the ultimate
2. Wisdom that knows the conventional
3. Wisdom that knows how to act for the welfare of living beings

The first two are part of the basic structure of the whole Buddhist teaching in terms of the two bases, the two paths and the two fruits. The first two wisdoms refer to the two bases, which relates to the two truths – ultimate truth and conventional truth. The two paths refer to skilful method and wisdom. Finally, the two fruits are the rupakaya or form body and dharmakaya or wisdom truth body of a fully enlightened being.

(1') Wisdom that knows the ultimate

Wisdom that knows the ultimate cognizes the reality of selflessness, either by means of a concept or in a direct manner.

This talks about the wisdom that realises ultimate truth. There are two types: one realises emptiness conceptually through the medium of a mental image, and the other cognises ultimate truth directly.

The wisdom of ultimate truth which is within the continuum of an ordinary being cognises it conceptually or through the medium of a mental image, whereas the wisdom of ultimate truth which is within the continuum of a superior or arya being is the direct wisdom of ultimate truth.

(2') Wisdom that knows the conventional

Wisdom that knows the conventional is wisdom that is proficient at the five topics of knowledge. The *Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras* says:

Without making effort at the five topics of knowledge,
Even supreme noble beings do not reach omniscience.
So they must strive for these so as to refute others,
To care for others, and to know everything.

We have covered the five types of knowledge in previous teachings. They are:

The topics are distinguished by the different sorts of purposes for pursuing them. To refute those who do not believe in the teaching, you pursue knowledge of grammar and logic.

The first two sciences are grammar or sound and logic. Beside the purpose mentioned here, the specific benefit of becoming very proficient in the sciences of sound or grammar and logic is that one will never be confused about the meaning of words, which helps with understanding the meaning of sounds and words.

The text continues:

To help those who do believe, you pursue knowledge of the arts and medicine.

Next are the two kinds of knowledge:

To achieve knowledge of all for yourself, you pursue Buddhist knowledge.

The fifth is the sign of knowledge concerning Buddhist philosophy and spirituality. As the text says:

But to attain buddhahood, there are no such distinctions between them; you must pursue all the topics of knowledge.

(3') Wisdom that knows how to act for the welfare of living beings

Wisdom that knows how to act for the welfare of living beings knows the way to accomplish blamelessly the welfare of beings in their present and future lives.

This talks about the wisdom of accomplishing the welfare of other beings by benefiting them in this and future lives, in such a way that you don't cause them to create any non-virtues or negative actions along the way.

(d') How to practice

When you develop the three types of wisdom, you do so in association with the six supremacies and all six perfections. The generosity of wisdom is establishing others in wisdom after you have stabilized yourself in it. The remaining perfections are as presented before.

Next is the summary.

(e') A summary

Even if you have the wisdom that perceives emptiness, it does not become a bodhisattva deed without the spirit of

enlightenment, so steadily increase the spirit of enlightenment—the basis of the bodhisattva deeds.

Here the text emphasises that the wisdom of emptiness needs to be supported or complemented by bodhicitta. As it says, *even if you have the wisdom that perceives emptiness, it does not become a bodhisattva deed*. Whether or not your deeds will become bodhisattva deeds depends on the bodhicitta mind. This is very true, because if we consider the practices of shravakas (or hearers) and pratyekabuddhas (or solitary realisers), they have also gained the direct realisation of emptiness and engage in the practices of generosity, moral ethics and so forth. However, because they lack bodhicitta, their deeds are not bodhisattva deeds.

Therefore, as the text says, *steadily increase the spirit of enlightenment which is the basis of the bodhisattva deeds*. As mentioned at the beginning of this talk, when we consider our own practice of bodhicitta, then what we have at the moment is the seed of the bodhicitta mind which we have acquired through gaining some understanding about bodhicitta and trying to cultivate it. What is now required is to really focus on and understand how important it is to nurture that seed of bodhicitta within us. By infusing our mind with bodhicitta or the knowledge seed of it, then whatever practices or actions we do will resemble the bodhisattva deeds. Then it says:

Next, aspire to the wisdom of those at high levels and then train your mind in it.

There are spiritual realisations or wisdom which we have not yet gained, or which are too advanced or high for us at the moment. However, we can practise and train ourselves in them by way of mentally wishing and aspiring for them.

From this moment you must strive to produce the three types of wisdom—the method for completing the peerless, great collection of sublime wisdom—and you must study.

This is emphasising how important this wisdom is.

For, if you do not do this, you contradict the principal precept and will then be destroyed by faults and infractions; in future lives as well you will not take pleasure in broad learning.

That is to say, if you do not focus on cultivating and developing this wisdom then there is the danger of transgressing or breaking your spiritual precepts. This might happen, because one of the doors of downfall is the lack of knowledge. We need to be aware of the shortcomings of not cultivating or not gaining wisdom, which include committing infractions.

Consequently, you will be unable to learn the bodhisattva trainings.

This talks about the shortcomings of not gaining wisdom in this life and in future lives.

Whereas, if in this life you strive at the methods of developing wisdom, you prevent the infraction of not training in the six perfections as promised; then in other lives as well, as the *Questions of Subahu Sutra* says, you will easily be able to complete the perfection of wisdom.

We also need to reflect on the benefit of cultivating wisdom.

Nowadays, from among the six perfections—the center post of both the sutra and tantra paths— ...

Here we can clearly see the significance of the six perfections on our spiritual path, in both sutra and tantra. As it says, *the six perfections are the centre post of both sutra and tantra paths*.

... there exist in slight measure the stages of the practice of meditative stabilization, but the stages of the practice of the other five perfections have disappeared.

As it says here, there is a decline in terms of the explanation of the stages of the practice of the other five perfections. However, in relation to the perfection of meditative stabilisation, as said here, *there exist in slight measure the stages of the practice of meditative stabilisation.*

Therefore, I have explained the key points of their practice in abbreviated form and a little of the method for generating certain knowledge of them. Below, I will teach at length two topics that come from the classic texts: the stages of how to practice insight-wisdom that observes the real nature and the diversity of phenomena-and the stages of the practice of meditative serenity, which is meditative stabilization.

All bodhisattvas who will attain buddhahood do so in reliance upon the six perfections. The *Bodhisattva Levels* says this emphatically at the conclusion of its discussions of each of the six perfections. Hence, these six perfections are to be known as the one path traveled by bodhisattvas of the past, present, and future. And because these six are the great ocean of all virtues, they are the perfect summary of the key points of practice. The *Bodhisattva Levels* states:

Bodhisattvas who attain unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment by these six perfections are called a great river, a great ocean of virtues; generosity and so forth are the most precious causes of all excellent things for all living beings.

Accordingly, there is nothing comparable to the perfections' immeasurable completion of the collections of merit and sublime wisdom and their fruit of unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment.

This is pointing out how the six perfections include practices necessary for accumulating merit and wisdom. Of the six, the first four are primarily for the collection of merit, and last two are for the collection of sublime wisdom.

However, the perfection of concentration can be categorised either way. Sometimes it is included on the method side or for the accumulation of merit, but sometimes it is included on the wisdom side or as a means of accumulating wisdom.

Then the text says, *the collection of merit and sublime wisdom and their fruit of unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment.* Here, 'their fruit' is the fruit of the six perfections, which encompasses all the collections of merit and wisdom. The result is unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment which resembles or perfectly accords with its cause, the six perfections.

Now we move onto the next chapter.

HELPING OTHERS TO MATURE: THE FOUR WAYS TO GATHER DISCIPLES

The six perfections are primarily the method for ripening or maturing one's own continuum, whereas the four ways of gathering disciples are for ripening the continuum of other beings. Having said that, when we look into the six perfections, we can say that the four ways are also included in the six perfections, the first of which – generosity – is the first of the four ways to gather disciples; pleasant speech is also included within the perfection of giving. The next two ways of gathering can be included in the perfection of moral ethics. Nevertheless, the four ways to gather disciples have the very specific purpose of ripening the continuum of other beings so that they follow the virtuous path.

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