
Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱད་རྒྱུ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

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Based on the motivation we generated during the recitation, we can now engage in the practice of meditation.

[meditation]

You can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: for the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. For that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

1.1. Guarding the mind as a method for guarding the trainings

1.1.1.2. The reason for this (cont.)

1.1.1.2.2. Qualities depend on the mind

Here there are six subdivisions:

1.1.1.2.2.1. Generosity depends on the mind

1.1.1.2.2.2. Morality depends on the mind

1.1.1.2.2.3. Patience depends on the mind

1.1.1.2.2.4. Enthusiasm depends on the mind

1.1.1.2.2.5. Mental stabilisation depends on the mind

1.1.1.2.2.6. Wisdom depends on the mind

So, what is being presented here is that the practices of the six perfections are all dependent on the mind. Actually, the giving and taking meditation practice we engaged in earlier also combines all the essential points of the six perfections. When we visualise giving our body, wealth, merits etc. this includes the practice of generosity. With the sincere intention for other beings not to experience any suffering, when we take their suffering upon ourselves one is naturally refraining from harming them, thus it includes the practice of morality. When we generate a sense of compassion for other sentient beings we naturally refrain from feeling anger towards them, thus it encompasses the practice of patience. When we do the practice willingly and joyfully, then that encompasses joyous effort. Having a focused mind while engaging in the practice includes the practice of concentration. Likewise, because the intelligence of differentiating between what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded—the intelligence of knowing what is beneficial and what is harmful—increases through repetition of this practice, it includes wisdom as well.

Thus when we do this practice sincerely with all the conditions intact it definitely becomes a very profound practice. While we may not be able to incorporate the actual practices of the six perfections in our meditation practice yet, we can, however, still adopt an approximation of the six perfections. Our ability to do this depends on our motivation. As explained in the teachings, three conditions need to be intact for the practice to become a perfection. For example, when the practice of generosity is accompanied with actual bodhicitta, the realisation of emptiness, and sealed with the profound dedication of complete enlightenment, then it becomes the perfection of generosity and so forth. So, if we generate the bodhicitta motivation to the best of our ability, recall the view of emptiness during the practice, and seal our virtues with the dedication towards obtaining enlightenment at the end, this will then

ensure that our practice becomes an approximation to the actual perfection of the practices of generosity and so forth.

The *Heart Sutra* clearly indicates the need for the practice to be accompanied by the understanding of emptiness when Shariputra asks Avalokiteshvara, *How should any son or daughter of the lineage train who wishes to practice the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom?* and Avalokiteshvara replies *Any son or daughter of the lineage who wishes to practise in the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom should look upon it like this, correctly and repeatedly beholding those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.*

While each of the six perfections are not explicitly mentioned in the *Heart Sutra* the way the perfection of wisdom is to be practised relates to each of them and this is how we derive an understanding of the teachings. So, if one wonders, 'what is the difference between the individual practices such as generosity and so forth and the perfection of those practices?', then you need to understand it as was explained earlier.

In relation to the three conditions mentioned earlier, we already have the basis of love and compassion, we also have some understanding of emptiness, and we know how to dedicate our virtues. So the reason I emphasise this point again and again is to remind you that you already have a good basis for understanding the teachings. It is now a matter of putting your understanding of the Dharma into practice. Whenever we have any time to engage in a practice it is good to draw upon the understanding we have already gained from the teachings and then actually apply it in our practice. That makes it much more meaningful. For example, with love and compassion the general description is wishing other beings to be happy and to be free from suffering. However, we can make that practice much more profound with the understanding we have gained from the teachings. This is how we can develop the essential practice and make it more meaningful for ourselves. I encourage you in this because you have already received so many teachings and ways of applying these in your practice, and it would be a pity not to utilise that. It is with the intention of benefitting you that I encourage you again and again.

What I am trying to emphasise is that we need to use what we have already received and what we already know. With that serving as a basis we can then endeavour to acquire some new understanding or knowledge. Often we fall short in our practice by not utilising what we already know and keep looking for something new or grander. Often I find that many people fall short in their practice because of this attitude, and don't really advance themselves. I am not saying that gaining more or new knowledge is wrong. I am not implying that and you should not misunderstand me. What I am emphasising here is that we need to utilise what we already have, and if we acquire new understanding or knowledge, based on that, then it can only enhance our practice and will not confuse it.

As I emphasise regularly, love and compassion is the basis, and by maintaining this we can then incorporate other understandings, or knowledge, to enhance that within ourselves. That would be good—otherwise we could completely go astray. If I were to relate something as my personal practice I would say that it is the attempt to adopt love and compassion in my everyday life. This is actually a point I related to the late Khensur Rinpoche when I was in India. I spent about an hour with him, listening and talking, when he asked me, 'What are you meditating on these days?' and I said that I take love and compassion as my

main practice and we had a discussion about that for about an hour.

Rinpoche said, 'Oh, that is a simple practice, even lay people and elderly people, who are not monks and nuns, would practice that'. Perhaps Khensur Rinpoche was expecting me to give a much more profound answer. So when he questioned me further I said that I felt that this practice encompasses a lot of other practices. Of course I was sharing what I truly believe. Indeed, when we train our mind more and more on love and compassion, then every time we generate that mind it brings us closer to enlightenment. So this is why I see it as an essential practice. Sadly, Khensur Rinpoche passed away shortly after this meeting.

The three main conditions that help to subdue the mind are love, compassion and concentration (or mental stabilisation). So if we can take these three as our essential practices then there is no question that we can work towards subduing our mind.

With the first perfection of generosity, what is being explained here is that it actually depends on a state of mind which is generated within oneself. This dispels the doubt that if generosity were to depend on material objects then how could one practise generosity if one lacked material objects to give? So, to clarify this point, what is being explained is that the perfection of generosity does not depend on external material objects but actually on one's state of mind.

The worldly perspective is that if someone were to give \$100 to another person we would say they are very generous, because they gave \$100. We immediately relate to the object they give as a mark of their generosity, as if the giving of that physical money was the actual practice of generosity.

A literal translation of the Tibetan term for the perfections *par-chin* is *gone beyond*, which relates to the practices that have gone beyond the states of samsara and nirvana and reached the state of complete enlightenment. The Svatantrika middle-way school gives a very literal explanation of the term *gone beyond* and says that the perfections of the practices of generosity and so forth are found only in a buddha's mental continuum. However, the Prasangika middle-way school differentiates between that which is actually gone beyond and that which is in the process of going beyond. Thus, the perfected practice of generosity, which has actually gone beyond, is indeed found only in a buddha's mental continuum. However the practice of generosity, which is in the process of going beyond, is in the trainee's (bodhisattva's) mind. According to the Prasangika, it would be a case of applying the name of a result upon the cause: the perfection of generosity is the practice of generosity that is in the process of going beyond in the bodhisattva's mind. It is good to understand the difference in interpretations from the different schools.

1.1.1.2.2.1. Generosity depends on the mind

This heading is subdivided into two:

1.1.1.2.2.1.1. Completing the perfection of generosity does not depend on eliminating the poverty of all migrators.

1.1.1.2.2.1.2. It is perfected through the acquaintance with the mind of giving.

1.1.1.2.2.1.1. *Completing the perfection of generosity does not depend on eliminating the poverty of all migrators*

The verse reads:

9. *If generosity goes beyond
Through eliminating the poverty of migrators,
Since migrators still have poverty,
How could the previous refuge have gone
beyond?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

If it were necessary to eliminate the poverty of all sentient beings to complete the perfection of generosity, then, since impoverished migrators still exist, how could the generosity gone beyond exist?

How could the previous Buddha protectors possibly have completed the perfection of generosity? It would be impossible.

Bringing up this hypothetical query Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains that, *if it were necessary to eliminate the poverty of all sentient beings to complete the perfection of generosity* then, since there are still impoverished beings in need of things that would imply that the Buddha has not perfected the practice of generosity. This doubt is a way to present that the practice of the perfection of generosity does not depend on eliminating the poverty of all living beings.

We need to understand that our practice of generosity should not depend on the other, whether they are rich or poor, in great need or not. From our own side we need to be able to engage in the practice of generosity that is generated in our own mind.

Another practical illustration is that if the practice of the perfection of generosity depended on being generous with material objects that would mean that ordained Sangha would not be able to perfect the practice of generosity, because they don't have many material possessions to give away.

Another more prominent illustration would be Buddha Shakyamuni's own life. In his early days he would not have given up the wealth of his royal kingdom because that would have deprived him of the means of being able to practice generosity. Later, he actually left behind all his princely wealth, and become completely renounced.

Here again, the point is that the practice of generosity is not dependent on actual material wealth or completely satisfying other's needs. Rather it is dependent on the intent of giving, which is generated with one's own mind.

The means to perfect the practice of generosity is explained under the next heading.

1.1.1.2.2.1.2. *It is perfected through the acquaintance with the mind of giving*

The verse reads:

10. *Through the mind offering to all sentient beings
All possessions including their results,
Generosity goes beyond it is taught.
Therefore it is only mind.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

It is taught that the generosity gone beyond is perfected through acquainting one's mind with the wish to give away one's body, possessions, roots of virtue including their results, and one's merits to all sentient beings.

For this reason generosity depends on the mind.

The commentary clearly explains that the resultant or perfected state of generosity, which is completely going beyond, which is the mental continuum of an enlightened being, is reached through acquaintance with the mind that wishes to give away, now, one's body, possessions and roots of virtue including the results.

Again, the actual definition of generosity is the mind of giving or the intention to give. So the way to practise generosity is by generating the state of mind of wishing to give away one's body, possessions, roots of virtue etc. Again, we can relate to the giving and taking practice we did earlier. I need not elaborate too much on the importance of this practice, as it is exactly what is being presented here by Shantideva and further explained in the commentary, as being an essential practice. So we can see that our earlier practice, when done fully, encompasses all of these points.

So the way to engage in the practice, for it to become an authentic practice of generosity, we train our mind, gradually and slowly, to increase the intention of giving. To become an actual practice of generosity try to make it free from miserliness and, to the best of our ability, encompass an understanding of emptiness—that oneself, the giver, what is being given, and the action of giving, is empty of inherent existence. Incorporate that understanding as much as possible and then dedicate at the end. In this way our practice of generosity becomes really profound and we get so much merit from engaging in these practices. Giving away these merits as well makes it a profound practice.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

For this reason generosity depends on the mind.

We gain a better understanding of this point after the explanation.

1.1.1.2.2.2. Morality depends on the mind

This is subdivided into two:

1.1.1.2.2.2.1. Completing the morality gone beyond does not depend on the absence of sentient beings that one could kill

1.1.1.2.2.2.2. It is completed by acquainting the mind of abandoning.

1.1.1.2.2.2.1. Completing the perfection of morality does not depend on the absence of sentient beings that one could kill and so forth.

This does not depend on the absence of beings that one could harm. The point explained in the next the verse is that the perfection of morality is actually completed by acquainting the mind with abandoning the intention to harm.

*11ab. Fish and so forth, where should they flee to
So as not to be killed?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

It follows that the completion of the morality gone beyond does not depend on removing all sentient beings that could possibly be killed, because it is unfeasible to move all the animals such as fish and so forth to a safe place.

The explanation here is that completing the perfection of morality does not depend on removing all sentient beings that could be possibly killed, because it is not feasible to move all animals such as fish to a safe place where no one could harm them. We may be able to move some fish to a safe place where they would not be killed, but to remove all fish to where no one would be able to kill them is something that cannot possibly be done. Also there is no person who could always guard them, so that no-one comes and harms them.

1.1.1.2.2.2.2. It is completed by acquainting the mind of abandoning

The first two lines of the next verse explain this:

*11cd. Through the mind of abandoning,
Morality goes beyond, it is taught.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary highlights:

For this reason the morality gone beyond is achieved by acquainting the mind of abandoning, such as on the mind abandoning the thoughts of killing or stealing.

The practice of morality, relating to the perfection of morality, is dependent on a mind where from the depths of one's heart one makes the commitment that, 'I will not harm others. I will not kill even if my life is at stake. I will not take the life of other sentient beings'. In the commentary, *for this reason*, aligns to the earlier point that it is not even possible to find a safe haven for all of the animals and so forth, so they can never to be harmed. The perfection of morality is not dependent on establishing the situation (or place) where no beings will be harmed. Rather, as explained here, the morality gone beyond is achieved by acquainting the mind with abandoning the thoughts of killing and stealing. When one generates the mind of abandoning negativities such as killing and stealing (and likewise the other ten non-virtues), this clearly illustrates that while refraining from killing and stealing etc. is a good deed, doing so when one makes an actual commitment and intentionally generates the mind to refrain from such misdeeds, one gains much more virtue.

Many of you would already have vows which would include these sorts of commitments, but again even with the vows it is good to refresh them. It is much more meritorious to have vows than not, so one gains much more virtue when one actually intentionally develops the mind of refraining from engaging in misdeeds. Whenever one generates the mind of intentionally refraining from the ten non-virtues, such as making a commitment like, 'Today, at all costs, I will not engage in the act of killing or taking others' lives. Likewise I will not engage in the act of taking others' possessions. I will not engage in the act of sexual misconduct. Likewise I will not engage in lying, stealing, harsh words, divisive speech, idle gossip and so forth', then that is acquaintance with abandoning those negative deeds, and what we call the practice of morality. Each time we generate the intention of refraining from these misdeeds we accumulate great merit, much greater merit than if one were to just naturally refrain from these misdeeds.

The quote from a sutra encompasses the definition.

From a sutra:

If the morality gone beyond is explained: It is the intent to give up harming others.

1.1.1.2.2.3. Patience depends on the mind

Patience is the mind which, in the face of harms and sufferings, does not become disturbed. This has three subdivisions:

1.1.1.2.2.3.1. Meaning

1.1.1.2.2.3.2. The example

1.1.1.2.2.3.3. Relating the meaning and the example

1.1.1.2.2.3.1. Meaning

The verse reads:

*12. Unsubdued sentient beings equal space,
Destroying them is impossible.
Merely destroying this mind of anger,
Equals destroying all enemies.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Patience is completed by destroying one's anger, which equals destroying all external enemies. It is not achieved through the extinction of the objects of one's anger.

This is conclusive because unsubdued sentient beings equal space and it is impossible to destroy them all. Therefore patience also depends on the mind.

I have referred to the explanation *patience is completed by destroying one's anger which equals destroying all external enemies* several times. What is being implied here is that the practice of patience is not trying to overcome all external enemies since that is impossible. The actual practice of patience is dependent on one's own mind.

It is dependent on one's mind as it specifically destroys the anger in one's mind. Completing the perfection of patience is dependent of destroying anger in one's mind, rather than trying to overcome the external enemies. The commentary goes further when it says *this is conclusive because unsubdued sentient beings equal space and it is impossible to destroy them all*. The commentary concludes, *therefore also patience depends on the mind*.

1.1.1.2.2.3.2. The example

The verse reads:

13. *To cover the whole earth with leather,
Where should the leather come from?
To cover one's soles with leather
Equals covering the whole earth.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary proceeds:

Where would one find enough leather to cover the whole earth to prevent one's feet from being harmed by thorns and other sharp objects on the ground?

Covering the soles of one's shoes with leather will do the trick and prevent the feet from being harmed by thorns, sharp stones and the like. It equals covering the whole earth.

The verse poses the rhetorical question *where would one find enough leather to cover the whole earth?*, which implies that it is not possible to find enough leather to cover the whole earth to prevent one being harmed by thorns and other sharp objects. However *covering the soles of one's shoes with leather will do the trick and prevent the feet from being harmed by thorns*. So that is the method that equals covering the whole earth.

1.1.1.2.2.3.3. Relating the meaning and the example

The verse reads:

14. *Similarly, I do not oppose
External phenomena.
I should reverse this mind of mine,
Where is the need to oppose others?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

Similar to the analogy, it is impossible to oppose all harmful external phenomena. Instead one focuses one's mind on these objects and reverses the mind from generating anger. By acquainting the mind in such a way, patience is completed. Why should I oppose the objects of anger, it is impossible and unnecessary.

The commentary explains that, *similar to the analogy* of not being able to find enough leather to cover the earth to prevent sharp objects from harming oneself, *it is impossible to oppose all external phenomena*. The method used to perfect patience is to focus one's own *mind on these objects*, and reverse *the mind from generating anger*. This is a very

profound point—the actual practice of patience implies overcoming anger within oneself. By acquainting the mind in such a way, patience is completed. The point is emphasised again with another rhetorical question, *why should I oppose the other objects of anger since it is impossible to oppose them and actually quite unnecessary*. There is no reason to try to oppose all others and objects when it is possible to overcome the anger in one's own mind.

What is being explained here is that the practice of patience implies overcoming anger within oneself, rather than trying to overcome all external enemies. So if one thinks that, 'I can only be patient if all my enemies are overcome', then that is missing the point. If one wishes to overcome enemies then one needs to overcome anger within oneself. That is equivalent to overcoming all the external enemies and will be the mark of perfecting the practice of patience.

That completes the explanation on patience and how it is dependent on the mind. For the practice of patience to become a perfection of patience, again it would have to encompass the three essential conditions of bodhicitta: the altruistic motivation of bodhicitta; understanding the view on emptiness; and the dedication. This applies to all of the practices of the six perfections in order for them to become the actual perfections.

1.1.1.2.2.4. Enthusiasm depends on the mind

The definition of enthusiasm or joyous effort is the mind which takes joy in virtue.

The verse reads:

15. *The results of generating a clear mind
Is Brahma and so forth.
Results of inferior practice endowed
With body and speech are not like that.*

The first part of Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

The complete acquaintance of enthusiasm also depends upon the mind that has completed meditation. A clear mind of joy for meditating on an absorption of the first concentration brings about results contained within the grounds of absorption, such as rebirth in the place of Brahma.

This part of the commentary explains the reason why *the complete acquaintance of enthusiasm depends on the mind*. A clear mind of joy for meditating on an absorption of the first concentration which is a higher state, brings about results contained within the grounds of absorption, such as rebirth in the place of Brahma. This means that when even a moment of clear mind and joy arises from the absorption in the first concentration, because one applied joyous effort and achieved that state of mind, the result is to be born in the heavens of Brahma. Achieving this state also implies strength of the mind. The emphasis here is that when the mind is clear and strong, accompanied with the joy of practising such a meditation, then it can bring about a great result.

The next part of the commentary reads:

If one's actions are unrelated to such a strong mind, then one's mind is endowed with actions of body and speech, and such actions with lesser enthusiasm do not have the ability to produce a mind of the first concentration and so forth. Such a result depends on a strong mind.

When the mind lacks that strength and there is no joy in practices such as meditation, then one's physical and verbal actions will also carry less potency. So even if one were to attempt to meditate it will not bring about the results of

obtaining the first concentration and so forth. Thus, such results depend on joyous effort, which actually depends on the strength of one's mind.

1.1.1.2.5. Mental stabilisation depends on the mind

Mental stabilisation is the mind which in its own power has the ability to focus on an object for as long as one wishes.

16. *All recitations and austerities,
Even if practiced for a long time,
Done with a wandering mind
They are meaningless, the Knowledge teaches.*

This is indeed a direct reprimand for ourselves.

Gyalsab Je's commentary reads:

The completion of mental stabilisation gone beyond depends on a clear mind free from mental excitement and mental sinking and held by the mental application of renunciation.

Although one practices the recitation of mantras and austerities such as Nyung Nye for a long time, the mind is distracted to other objects.

We need to understand that in order for mental stabilisation to be an authentic mental stabilisation it has to be a clear mind that is free from mental excitement and mental sinking, or stupor. This can be helped by the mental application of renunciation.

From the Buddha's sutras,

Bhikhus, austerities, prayers and so forth that distract the mind to the desire realm do not have a result.

They are shown to be meaningless because of not giving the desired result.

We need to understand this quote in relation to recitation of mantras, austerities such as Nyung Nye, practices, retreats etc. which have been shown to be meaningless, because of not getting the desired result.

This explanation does not mean that there is no benefit at all in these practices; there is definitely a benefit even if one's mind is a little distracted. For example, there is still benefit in reciting mantras as you stop any other verbal negativities such as idle gossip etc. So to that extent there is definitely some benefit. However if one's mind is distracted, one will not reap the full benefit of the practice. This applies to any practice including the Nyung Nye practice. If one does a Nyung Nye of course one derives some benefit from merely engaging in the practice, but if the mind is distracted one will not reap the full benefit, just a minimal benefit.

The personal instruction here is that when we are doing any practice it is highly advisable to try and do it without a distracted mind. If one were to do one's practices in this way one will reap the actual intended benefit. Thus, it is good for us to prevent ourselves from being distracted.

1.1.1.2.6. Wisdom depends on the mind

- 17 *They who do not know the main supreme
Dharma,
This secret of the mind, although wishing
To attain happiness and destroy suffering,
They will wander meaninglessly in the hells
without respite.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary reads:

Wisdom also depends on the mind. A person that is not a vessel for the main dharma or the supreme meaning, and is thus not shown these, does not know the secret of mind, the ultimate truth.

Although they wish to attain highest happiness and destroy the sufferings of cyclic existence, they naturally wander to the realm without respite, where there is nothing of these things they wish for.

Therefore wisdom depends on the mind.

Again, the definition of wisdom is the mind which is able to clearly differentiate and discriminate between the subtleties of the objects to be examined.

The commentary clearly explains that wisdom depends on the mind, and that a person is not a vessel for the supreme meaning if they do not know the secret of the mind, the ultimate truth. This refers to the nature of the mind which is its non-inherent existence (or emptiness). To perfect wisdom, when the mind realises emptiness of all phenomena it also needs to realise the emptiness of one's own mind. For someone who does not know the ultimate truth of their mind, then although they wish to attain higher status and destroy the suffering of cyclic existence, they can actually wander in the samsaric realm without respite where there are none of the things they wish for. In other words, we could wander in the cycle of samsara, the nature of suffering for limitless time. However, by understanding the ultimate reality of all phenomena in relation to one's mind, one would free oneself from this, and attain liberation, or enlightenment.

Wisdom is perfected to the state of going beyond, to the state of enlightenment, when one understands the ultimate reality of one's mind. The commentary concludes *therefore wisdom depends on the mind.*

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

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