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## *The Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*

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We can start out meditating a little bit as usual. Please sit in a good upright position. Everyone wishes to have a clean body. If you don't focus on the inside of the body and we just look at it from the outside then everyone has a comparatively a clean body. One spends lots of money and has to engage in lots of effort in order to have a clean body. Having a clean body facilitates being happy and also makes one mentally happy. The one thing that is left to do is to also clean the mind. The aim is to have a happy mind. The body is already cleaned so now the mind needs to be cleaned.

We want to have both physical and mental cleanliness. Physical cleanliness has already been achieved and mental cleanliness has also to be achieved. You can already see that if you feel physically dirty then it makes you feel unwell. In the same way mental pollution also affects the mind and makes the mind unwell. You can understand the significance of having to clean and purify the mind – how important it is to purify and clean the mind in order to have mental wellbeing.

The main polluter of the mind is unsuitable conceptions. As one hasn't subdued the unsuitable conceptual mind one can't experience the innate clarity of the mind. Once the conceptual mind has subsided then the inner clarity of the mind and the inner purity of the mind can shine through more strongly. Presently the mind is overcome by the conceptual mind and we haven't experienced that innate clarity. The conceptual mind is the main thing that pollutes and disturbs the mind – one disturbing thought leading to the next disturbing thought until one has a multitude of disturbing and confusing concepts within one's mind that completely overpower the mind. In order to experience mental clarity and mental peace one needs to subdue or pacify the disturbing conceptual mind.

It is unsuitable concepts that prevent one from experiencing the innate clarity and purity of the mind. The main consciousness in its nature is pure. It is like crystal or a clean clear glass. If the glass is polluted, if it has lots of dust and dirt on it, then we cannot experience that clarity. One has to purify the glass and wipe all the dirt and dust off to

see the clarity of the glass. In the same way, as long as the main mind is obscured by various unsuitable thoughts, the various unsuitable conceptual minds, then its clarity and purity cannot be apprehended. Even though one might not have had a direct experience of that purity of the main mind, one can verify the difference of the mind... how one feels when the mind is overcome by unsuitable conceptual thoughts. When the mind is disturbed the mind is unhappy and unclear. If the mind is free from the control of disturbing conceptual thoughts then it experiences inner peace... the mind is clearer and one is more relaxed and happier. So even at the present time one can appreciate the difference between a mind that is under the control of unsuitable concepts and one that is not.

It is also important to remember that the unsuitable conceptual thoughts are an adventitious obscuration of the innate purity of the mind but they are not of one nature with the mind. They are adventitious or obscurations in the same way as the dirt and dust on the glass is only adventitious. It is not there permanently but can be wiped off and the glass can be cleaned. In the same way also the disturbing thoughts within the mind are only adventitious and can be removed and purified through Dharma practice. Some people look at their mind and despair thinking: "Oh, I'm always like that". They think of their mind as being in a permanent state and being always obscured or disturbed by those unsuitable disturbing thoughts. That is not the case. The unsuitable concepts are adventitious obscurations that can be removed and purified from the mind. That is something you should know.

Whatever activity we engage in we do so we can receive some benefit. It is also good to be aware that one practises meditation for the benefit of inner happiness, for one's benefit. It is also good to know which type of meditation to practise, what the object of the meditation should be and what the nature of the disturbing concepts are and then how the meditation can pacify the disturbing concepts, etc.

The meditation we practise tonight is the primary antidote against the over-conceptualising mind. Some of you might have a problem with over-conceptualisation, some of you might not, but regardless that is the meditation we are practising tonight. Bring the mind back home focusing it completely towards the inside, freeing it from the control of disturbing thoughts that try to distract it towards the outside – instead bring it back home, focus it completely inwards. Once you have done

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that place the mind single pointedly on the coming and going of the breath and then remain focused on the coming and going of the breath for a few minutes. (*Pause for meditation*)

That's enough. If you meditate again and again doing a little bit of meditation that's very good.

Last time we talked about morality... the three types of morality. Today we can talk a little bit about the benefits of morality. Morality is the basis for all types of qualities. The higher trainings of concentration and wisdom are important but they both depend on the higher training of morality. Without the higher training of morality one won't have a good higher training of concentration. And without good higher training of concentration, one won't have the higher training of wisdom. The basis of one's practice is the ground of morality. If one practises morality well then one will achieve greater inner happiness. Morality brings about inner peace. It is also explained in the teachings that the practise of morality is the basis for future happiness. If one wants to attain happiness in future lives then the basis for that is the practice of morality. So morality is the basis for the happiness of both this life as well as future lives.

If one wants to practise good morality one needs to rely on good friends, on appropriate company. The company that one keeps has a very strong influence on one's life. If one wants to be able to practise pure morality then one should keep the appropriate company. Otherwise misleading friends can have a strong negative influence on one's life and cause one to engage in various non-virtuous actions. Quite often whether one engages in virtuous actions or non-virtuous actions is dependent on the influence of one's friends and one's company. Therefore one shouldn't just keep any type of company or any type of friend - one should be discerning with regards to the company that one keeps.

Further the precious training of morality is the main cause for a precious human rebirth. Therefore one should make as much effort as one can in practising pure morality.

One should practise good morality as much as possible. Those who have vows have the morality of keeping those vows. For those who don't have vows the main practise is the morality of avoiding the ten non-virtuous actions. The main practice is to avoid giving harm to others. One should always have a virtuous motivation and try as much as possible to avoid giving harm to others and try to do actions that benefit others. Therefore one should practise morality as much as one can according to one's capacity. Even if it is just for one hour or if it

is just for one day it will be a benefit. Try to increase virtuous mental states and virtuous actions of body, speech and mind as much as possible and to try to avoid the non-virtuous actions of body, speech and mind as much as possible.

Lama Tsong Khapa said that one should be one's own virtuous teacher. One should realise what harms oneself in this life and what causes future harm: then recognising those harmful actions oppose them with the appropriate antidotes and confess the non-virtuous actions that have been created. If one has a holy being to whom one can confess then one can do that. One can also invite the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas into the space in front of oneself and then practise confession to them.

We come now to the third perfection the perfection of patience. Verse 27 from the text, *The Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattva*, (Snow Lion Publications, New York 1997) reads:

*"To Bodhisattvas who want a wealth of virtue  
Those who harm are like a precious treasure.  
Therefore towards all cultivate patience  
Without hostility -  
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas."*

"To Bodhisattvas who want a wealth of virtue those who harm are like a precious treasure." Bodhisattvas who want a wealth of virtue have to practise patience because anger destroys one's merits. Therefore they cultivate patience with regards to everything without hostility. This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

The meaning of patience is a mind that is unaffected and undisturbed by harm and suffering. Though one might not outwardly react to problems or to harm but if inwardly one is angry then that is not the meaning of patience. Even though, according to worldly conception, one might say; "Oh that person has been very patient" because they didn't express their anger that was not the practice of patience. The practice of patience refers to the mind that is unaffected by suffering and harm. Even though one might not express the anger if the anger has arisen in the mind then there is no patience.

The practice of patience refers to being able to keep a peaceful mind in a time of adversity. Misunderstanding the practice of patience there are some people who say that one shouldn't meditate on patience because it will just keep your anger bottled up inside and cause further harm. Sometimes it seems to be beneficial if one expresses one's anger in words as that might bring some temporary relief which counteracts the danger of

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keeping anger bottled up inside which can cause further future harm. But the expression of anger which might bring about some temporary release is not the practice of patience – that shouldn't be confused.

Also one sometimes finds oneself in the very strange situation where another person starts an argument and if one doesn't reply because one practices patience the other person gets even more upset because they feel ignored when one doesn't reply or one doesn't respond to what they have to say. There can be various situations where there can be a benefit to expressing one's feelings at the time instead of keeping them inside but that is not the practice of patience. The practice of patience is for the mind to remain peaceful despite adverse conditions.

You can be in the situation where you have a quarrel or dispute with someone and they feel slighted because you don't reply because of your practice of patience. That can happen and some people get funny that way. There is also the other situation where you have the wish to reply and you would feel unwell if you didn't say anything in reply. Some people are also funny with regards to that. The practice of patience will enable one to have a peaceful mind in the face of adversity. If one doesn't practise patience then one will lose one's mental happiness and peace. If one let's one's mind be overcome by anger then one loses one's mental happiness and peace. (...pause then laughter)

There can be the situation where two people have had a dispute but one person practised patience and the other person didn't. The person who practised patience could probably remain peaceful and calm because their mind wasn't really affected by what happened and they will sleep very well afterwards. The person who didn't practise patience will have trouble sleeping because their mind became agitated and disturbed by anger.

Of the three types of patience the first one is the patience unaffected by harm. The patience that disregards harm is the patience that is not affected by harm. The mind that is unaffected by harm is the patience that disregards harm. And the mind that is unaffected by suffering is the patience bearing suffering. And then we have the third type of patience, the patience of definitely relying on Dharma. Here one again and again ascertains the qualities and nature of the three jewels, selflessness, etc.

So there are three types of patience and next time then we can elaborate more on the practice of patience. I think it is good if we dwell on this subject for a little while. One has to become a

person without hate and anger but that is up to oneself. By applying the antidote and the meditations one has to transform for oneself into a person without anger and hate which comes about through one's own practice.

So then do we have some questions? It is good to check up for oneself whether one would rather have anger as a friend or regard anger as the enemy. Then for tonight do we have some questions? If you have a question then ask them.

*Question from student about keeping company with people who are suicidal, have bad habits, etc. but sometimes one feels the need to go and help them.*

*Answer:* The question was about going and helping people who are disturbed by delusions and bad behaviour. Of course you have to help those people and that it is the practice of compassion to help all sentient beings. We have to help those that have both physical sicknesses as well as mental sickness. That's one's practice that one has to do as much as possible. We will come to that point. We will talk about that topic at a later point in the text where it talks about meditating on compassion.

*Question regarding a friend who is a drug addict – "how do you have patience with someone who knows they are on a destructive path?"*

*Answer:* That would not be the practice of patience because he is only harming himself [and not you]. Of course, you have to help them, so maybe the question is how you want to help.

*Person resumes questioning... "But how do you stop being angry when you see someone you love is trying to kill themselves?"*

*Answer:* That leads to the same point which is the importance of meditating on compassion for the other person and again that is a point we will come to a little bit later in the text. In general, if a person is overcome by delusions then they don't know what they do, they don't have control of what they are doing. Even if they harm us we don't become angry but only generate compassion for them because we understand that they are under the control of their own afflictions and delusions. Their actions don't become a cause for our anger but for our compassion. If you reflect on the point that the other person is experiencing mental suffering because they are under the control of anger that would greatly help you to generate compassion for the other person. If you are aware of the suffering of the other person arising from their anger then you generate compassion for the other person. It doesn't leave the space for you to generate anger towards the other person.

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An example that is given is if a mother's child is very sick and has been brought to the hospital and then because the child is completely delirious and perhaps because of the sickness and the medicine the child hits the mother. The mother won't get angry at the child because of her strong concern and compassion for the child and her understanding that the action was only done because the child was very delirious. That is similar.

We also know the situation where a person when sober is very kind and friendly and a good person, but once they start taking drugs, through the influence of the drug on their mind, they become very aggressive and disturbed. As one knows that that state came about because of the drug one doesn't become angry at the person. One has the understanding of where it comes from and views such a person with compassion.

In my region in Tibet there was a woman who, during the earlier part of her life, was very beautiful and very well off. But she started to take drugs and became dependent on drugs. Towards the end of her life she was reduced to stealing from other people to support her habit. She had fallen down completely. When people saw her coming, when they knew she was around, they didn't behave abusively towards her or become angry they just took care of their possessions (*laughter*) but otherwise they viewed her with compassion, thinking: "Oh that's how it goes." During the latter part of her life the beauty had gone away and she was very ugly.

The drugs had a harmful effect on the on the physical appearance of the person. Even in the case of cigarettes you can observe the effects on a person who smokes cigarettes. Let's say there is a person who first doesn't smoke but then starts to smoke and even after having smoked just a few cigarettes one can observe the difference in the appearance of the person. There is something in the beauty and the attractiveness of the person that has gone missing through smoking. If someone wishes to appear to be beautiful and handsome then they shouldn't smoke. (*Laughter*) If you tell that to someone who is younger it might have some benefit. (*Laughter*)

Sometimes I say to small children that when I was young I used to eat lots of chocolate and that's why now my teeth are all rotten at the back and I show them my teeth and it discourages *them*. Then if I tell them: "Now here have some chocolate, do you want it?" They say they don't want it.

Is there anything else?

*Question : Can Geshe-La talk about how to combine the practice of pure appearance with the practice of patience?*

*Answer:* The practice of pure appearance. The question relates to the correlation between the practice of pure appearance and patience. The practice of pure appearance refers to not looking at the faults of other people but looking at their qualities. That is the practice of pure appearance. The practice of patience refers to being able to keep a peaceful, unaffected and undisturbed mind in the face of adversity, suffering, problems, etc.

As was explained at the beginning, bring the mind back home and make it abide calmly and stably and then focus it single-pointedly on the sound of the name mantra of Shakyamuni Buddha.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

*Transcribed from tape by Gaye Lewis-Radcliffe*

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*Edited Version*

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