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## *The Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*

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23 October 2002

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We can practise some meditation as usual. Sit in a good relaxed physical posture. The purpose of meditation is to make the mind more workable, serviceable and clear. If the mind is serviceable and clear then, regardless of outer circumstances, one will experience inner happiness. If one is mentally happy, one can then convey that happiness to others. So, here we can see the benefit to others of making the mind serviceable and clear.

As I always say, it is one's own responsibility to make the mind happy, stable and clear. If one can do this, while at the same time developing discriminating awareness – the wisdom that knows right from wrong, that understands the delusions and karma, etc. – one will experience great inner happiness and benefit others.

We know from experience how others will be affected in a positive way when one's mind is happy. We also know how, if our mind is unhappy and negative, it can affect those around us in a negative and a harmful way. If you think about the benefit to others that comes about if our mind is serviceable, clear and supported with wisdom, you will understand the significance and importance of practising meditation properly.

You may be thinking right now: "Yes, what he's saying is very true and desirable, but it's very difficult to accomplish. It would be nice to have such a mind, but it seems difficult to accomplish". You might doubt your own ability to be able to accomplish this.

However, you should recollect the potential that comes, first of all, with just being a sentient being, a sentient being with ability and potential. As a sentient being, one has a particular potential. And, as a human being, one has the ability to achieve all the happiness that is possible for human beings to accomplish. So, by recollecting one's own potential, one can generate strength of mind.

You should think: "I'm a human being. I can achieve all the happiness that can be achieved by human beings. I can eliminate the sufferings of human beings. I have the discriminating awareness that human beings possess". By reflecting in such a way on your potential, you can build up your strength of mind.

One practises meditation to make one's mind more stable and clear. It is important to have mental stability and clarity for one's inner wisdom to become effective. The inner companion of wisdom can work more efficiently if the mind is not disturbed by over-conceptualising.

Therefore, to pacify the mind and the disturbing thoughts, you have to try to bring the mind back home –

focusing it inwards and freeing it from the control of the disturbing thoughts that try to distract it towards the outside. Focus the mind within, not letting it be disturbed; let the mind remain focused internally, not being distracted towards outside objects. Next, place the mind single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath, and then take the coming and going of the breath as your meditation object. We will meditate in this way for a few minutes. *[Pause for meditation]*

I disturbed your mind with my coughing! If one's meditation is going well and someone coughs, it can be a bit disturbing. I have that experience also. *[Laughter]*

Previously, we talked about the benefits of meditating on patience, and the disadvantages of anger. By doing this meditation – recognising that anger gives us harm, while patience protects our mind – we will naturally arrive at the viewpoint that anger is the enemy, a fault, and that patience is a quality, an inner virtue that one should develop.

By developing this discriminating awareness, one is able to see the disadvantages and faults of anger and the benefits of patience, and will naturally develop the wish to practise patience. One has the ability to generate such discriminating awareness by reflecting on the various faults of anger and the benefits of patience. By doing the practice, one will experience the benefits.

Patience is our inner refuge. When we generate anger in the mind, we experience much suffering and problems. This is something everyone can confirm through his or her own experience. However, through the practice of patience, one can reduce one's anger. The more familiar one becomes with the practice of patience, the less one will experience anger, and the less one will experience the suffering and problems that accompany anger. And this way, our practice of patience becomes our refuge that rescues us from the suffering of anger, and also rescues us from the suffering of the lower realms in a future life, as we have already mentioned here.

If you generate apprehension and fear whenever anger is about to arise, that is a good sign. One should generate fear and aversion to the arising of anger, and not want it to arise. If we are in a situation where there is a danger of anger arising within the mind, then if we have this apprehension and aversion to the arising of anger, that is a good sign, something we should aim for. Through this, one will actually experience less anger.

Of course, after having meditated on the benefits of patience and the faults of anger, one also needs to apply the actual meditation technique of meditating on patience. Within one's mind, the strong wish should arise of wanting to practise the various meditations on patience.

As we said last time, patience has a threefold division. The first of the three types of patience is the patience that disregards the people, things or situations that bring us harm and suffering. Here, the first technique we apply is that of investigating whether the agent that brings about

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the suffering possesses a self or not. The aim is to establish within one's mind that there is no reason for generating anger towards the agent of one's suffering.

We follow this line of reasoning to prove to ourselves that it is pointless to generate anger towards the agent of one's suffering. The line of reasoning and investigation we follow is to investigate whether the agent of one's suffering, the other person, has purposely generated the motivation of wanting to harm us. We investigate whether or not they deliberately wanted take away our happiness and cause us suffering.

Thus, the first object of our investigation first is whether the other person has freedom of choice in their actions. Are they engaging in that action out of free will? Or is it because someone else is forcing them to engage in the action? This is the first object of one's analysis.

If it were the case that the other person didn't have free will in carrying out their action, then it would be unsuitable for us to generate anger towards them. One arrives at this conclusion that the other person doesn't have freedom of choice in carrying out their action, by firstly seeing that they are controlled by their delusions. Because that person's mind has not abandoned the seeds of delusions – in this case anger – the seed for the arising of anger is present.

[Having not abandoned the seed of anger] is one condition that will cause anger to arise in a person's mind. The second internal condition is that of a misleading conception – the mental exaggeration of the object of one's dislike into something much worse and more negative than it actually is.

Once these two internal conditions come into contact with the object [of the anger], then anger will arise within that person's mental continuum without any choice. When these three come together [the seed of the delusion, the mistaken conception that exaggerates the bad aspects of the object, and close proximity to the object], anger will arise within the mental continuum without any choice, whether one wants it or not.

We can relate this to our own experience. When those three conditions come together, the delusion [of anger] will arise within one's mind, regardless of one's intention. We don't just think: "I want this delusion to arise"; rather, the delusion will arise even if we don't want it to.

We also know this in conjunction with attachment. If those two inner conditions come together, and we meet the outer object of our attachment, we don't even need to ask for attachment to arise. It arises whether we want it or not.

So, anger arises also arises spontaneously in the mind of the other person, whether they want it or not, when those three conditions come together for them. We should reflect on how anger is generated without any freedom of choice or choice in the mind of the other person because of the accumulation of these three conditions. As a result, they suffer.

This line of investigation is how one comes to understand that the other person is involuntarily under the control of anger. It is as if they become possessed or become the slave of their anger. Since they are under the control of their anger involuntarily, it is not appropriate or suitable to generate anger towards them. It is not right to generate anger towards the other person if they don't have freedom of choice.

To enforce our understanding of how delusions are generated without any freedom or control in the mind of the other person, we can take as a lesson our own experience. We engage in various actions that we don't really want to do without freedom of choice; various mental states are involuntarily generated within our mind. By taking our experience as a teacher, we can enforce this understanding of how other people are also under the control of anger without freedom of choice. Since the other person doesn't have freedom of choice, it is inappropriate to generate anger towards them.

What if the person is forced into an action by something else? We have already established that the person doesn't have any freedom regarding the action, so it is inappropriate to generate anger towards them. If they also have been forced to engage in that action, it is likewise inappropriate to generate anger towards them.

There are certain sentient beings who, because of a disturbance within their mind, become crazy and disturbed, even to the point of harming those who teach them the path to liberation. By understanding that the person is basically crazy, one does not generate anger towards them. For example, if one's mother were to become mentally disturbed and be put in hospital, she might hit you because of her mental disturbance. One would not generate anger towards her, because one would understand that her action only came about as a result of her craziness and mental disturbance.

In the same way, if one is harmed by someone whose actions come about because of their mental disturbance and craziness, one should not generate anger towards that person. Bodhisattvas do not generate anger at others forced into doing things by their crazy minds. Not only this, but bodhisattvas will also generate a strong aspiration to free the other person from their inner enemy of the delusion, thinking about ways and means of helping that other person to free himself or herself from the control of the delusions.

Thus, by understanding the nature of the other person's mind – how their mind is under their control of their mental afflictions – we do not generate anger towards them, but rather think about ways and means of helping them overcome the inner enemy of their afflictions. If a mother is hit by a child who is delirious because of sickness, the mother will not be offended or upset with the child, but will rather think of ways of helping the child to overcome the sickness and mental disturbance.

By reflecting in such a way, one is able to not only meditate on patience, but also to meditate on compassion for the other person. Meditating on the other person's situation generates compassion for them. By

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relating it to ourselves, we can see how they are not deliberately setting out to destroy our happiness and cause us suffering; rather, their action comes about because the delusion of anger arises without any control in their mind.

After meditating along these lines, if you arrive at the point where you recognise that it is inappropriate to generate anger towards the other person, regardless of whether they are friend or an enemy, then you will not lose your own inner mental happiness in these situations.

So, rather than replying in kind when your partner or friend is angry at you, if you instead reflect on their situation – their problem of not having any freedom of choice at that time, which allows their anger to arise unchecked – you will be able to keep your mind undisturbed. By reflecting on the other person's situation, your own mind won't become disturbed. This is the practice of patience.

This was a brief discussion of one of the techniques of meditating on the first type of patience – the patience that disregards the agent of one's suffering.

Another line of reasoning and investigation one can follow is that of analysing whether the other person is the direct cause of the harm. For example, if one is beaten with a stick, it is the stick that directly causes the harm and makes contact with our body. So, do we get angry at the stick or not? *[Laughter]*

We don't get angry at the stick, although it is the stick that has harmed us directly. We get angry with the person who is wielding the stick. However, if we pursue this line of logic further, we will arrive at the conclusion we arrived at before. The person is not a free agent, just as the stick is not a free agent; rather, the person is 'wielded' by their anger. Consequently, it would not be appropriate for one to be angry at the person, in the same way that one would not be angry at the stick.

When a person hits a partner or friend, such a person is usually not in control of themselves, because ordinarily a sane person would not hit a friend. This shows that they are actually under the control of their delusions.

This is a short presentation of how to meditate on the first type of patience that disregards the agent of one's problems. It is good to reflect on patience that way. The second type of patience is the patience that willingly bears suffering. We can talk about next time. We have time for a few questions.

*Question inaudible.*

*Answer:* To be able to completely pacify all the disturbances happening at such a time might be a little difficult. However, it is important to not let one's mind be disturbed by such events. One has plenty of opportunity to meditate on patience, to reflect on how those people who brought about that disturbance and harm are under the control of their own inner delusions.

It is important not to let one's own mind become disturbed and to generate anger oneself. The more disturbances one faces, the more opportunity one has to

practise patience. Then at least one's own mind will not be disturbed by anger. That's very important.

These types of people act on the motivation of wanting to benefit their friends and those on their 'side', and to harm their enemies or what they regard as the other side. However, such actions don't accomplish much.

We often say that instead of focusing on a distant enemy and trying to accomplish happiness in that way, one should rather focus on the nearby enemy. It is more important that we focus on the seemingly hidden enemies of our daily life – our negative attitudes. The comparatively petty negative attitudes we have towards the people we dislike in our life are in fact our deadly enemies. If one's focus is on a very great problem that is far away, one may disregard the smaller harms that are nearby. But the ones nearby are the ones that will bite!

It is important that we treat those around us correctly and appropriately. We might voice grand opinions about other countries – how they should behave, how they shouldn't fight, how they should live peacefully, how one government shouldn't fight with another government – but if we don't find anything wrong with being angry or fighting with those close to use, obviously there is something wrong.

As explained at the beginning, bring the mind back home, focusing it inwards and not letting it be disturbed by thoughts that try to distract it towards the outside. Then, from within that space, recite the mantra of Shakyamuni Buddha.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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*Edited Version*

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