
The Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas

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We can practise a bit of meditation as usual. Sit comfortably and relaxed, in a good physical posture. On the basis of this, if the mind can also be placed in a rested state – taking a rest from the different types of mental problems – that would be very good.

As we said previously, it is important that one relaxes both physically as well as mentally and establishes both physical and mental happiness. Achieving that depends upon oneself. It is one's own responsibility to bring about that happiness. Attaining happiness is up to us. It is impossible for someone else to take away our suffering and it is impossible for someone else to give us happiness. We have to generate the happiness that we wish to attain. We have a saying in Tibet that if one doesn't take responsibility for one's own happiness, then other people will give one plenty of problems.

Having all the outer conditions conducive to happiness, one should feel that one is happy and let that happiness be expressed towards the outside. Express that happiness and, in this way, it will also carry over to others. Otherwise, people will bring you plenty of problems.

We are responsible for bringing about our own physical and mental happiness. Ordinarily, we think that our physical happiness is our responsibility, but that our mental happiness depends upon others. Actually, our mental happiness is also our responsibility. It is one's responsibility to try to clear and pacify one's mind.

On the basis of sitting in a good and relaxed physical posture, we try to focus the mind inwards, concentrating it totally within. If one is able to keep the mind in that space, one will experience a certain relaxation within the mind. Even though during the meditation one might experience physical problems – because one may find it difficult to sit in meditation – if one experiences mental rest that has come about through focusing the mind internally, it will benefit one's physical body.

After having focused the mind completely inside, place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. Take the coming and going of the breath as the meditation object. We can do that for few minutes. *[Pause for meditation.]*

Meditation is practised slowly and in a relaxed manner. One shouldn't have the idea that one's practice of meditation is separate from day-to-day life. One actually has to mix one's practice of meditation with day-to-day life. Otherwise, one might get the idea that "because I have so much work to do, so many things to do, I won't be able to practise meditation".

During the day, there are many opportunities for us to purify our actions of body, speech and mind. Quite often, one's mind is distracted at one's workplace, and it might be very difficult during the actual work to completely avoid letting the mind fall under the control of the disturbing thoughts and distractions. But, in the breaks one takes, one can try to again focus the mind completely towards the inside and not let it be disturbed by various types of distractions.

These time-periods in between work are very important. Although one might not be able to completely avoid distractions during that time, at least if one could try to set up the mental habit of subduing the mind a bit and trying to free it from distraction, that would be very good. By setting up this mental pattern early in one's life, then slowly it will come naturally.

Later on, when there may not be any work, one won't experience problems, because one's mind will automatically remember that there is something to do here – that when one has no work, one can spend that time subduing the mind and freeing it from distractions. Once we become habituated to this, we will experience some inner happiness as a result of that practice. Then when we don't have any work, we won't despair, and we will be able to experience the inner happiness that comes from having a subdued mind.

It is good for us to try and to set up that habit from an early age. When children reach the age of about 16 years, they have to take responsibility for their own life, regardless of whether they have parents or not. Regardless of how their parents live, children at this age must take responsibility for their lives, and for the 60 or 70 years ahead of them. It's up to each person how those 60 or 70 years are to be lived and for the state each of them ends up in at the end of their lives.

Certain people experience great difficulty once they cease work. There is difficulty in working, but once the difficulty of working has ceased, there's the difficulty of not working. The difficulty of not working can be eliminated if one is in the habit of meditation. Therefore, it is good to at least try, during the periods between work, to avoid distraction and to subdue one's mind. That will also eliminate the danger of wasting too much money during that time! *[Laughter]*

It's important to try and not let one's mind be 100% distracted towards the outside. Try to rein in the mind – let's say 50% or, if possible, 60% or 70%. If one were able to rein in one's mind 100%, one would be a really pure Dharma practitioner and that's very difficult! But 50% should be possible.

Generating the wisdom that can discriminate between what is beneficial and what is harmful for us, and which mental states are beneficial and which are harmful, can help us increase the positive states and decrease the negative. As a fruit of one's practice, one generates an understanding of the nature of one's mind and the workings of one's mind. This will come about through

one's own experience. It will not just be something we have heard from others, but something we have actually confirmed.

Geshe Chekawa said if we were to condense all phenomena, we could condense them into two. He was referring to all the phenomena of Dharma practice; one can condense all Dharma practices into two: abandoning giving harm to others, and benefiting others. Within those two practices of abandoning giving harm to others and benefiting others, one has the complete Theravada and Mahayana paths. The practice of the Three Higher Trainings and the practice of the Six Perfections are all condensed within those two Dharmas, and the practice of those two is also the practice of patience.

For example, practising the first Dharma – avoiding giving harm to others – is only possible on the basis of patience. If one doesn't have patience, one will retaliate in kind when one experiences harm. To be able to refrain from harming others, one needs patience. If one doesn't practice patience and replies with further harm to the harm received from another person, the problem won't be eliminated. If one retaliates when one is harmed, the practice of benefiting others will not happen, because if one harms others, one can't benefit them.

The great Chandrakirti said that if one has received harm – for example, if one has been hit on the head and even wounded and bleeding – hitting the other person in return won't heal the wound on one's head and won't wash away the blood. So, you can see that one's problems will not be eliminated by retaliation.

Out of the threefold division of patience, we have completed the patience that disregards the agent that brings problems, and the patience that willingly bears suffering.

We now come to the third patience: the patience of definite reliance on the Dharma. The practice of this patience – the patience of definitely relying on the Dharma, the patience of definitely contemplating the Dharma – means that again and again we must contemplate the various aspects of the Dharma and try to ascertain them. We can contemplate the various mental states that have to be abandoned, the various mental states that have to be practised, the qualities of the Three Jewels, and the various other aspects of the Dharma, such as the two types of selflessness, impermanence, and so forth. Reflecting again and again on these aspects of the Dharma and having the attitude of definitely wanting to ascertain these various aspects of the Dharma is the third type of patience.

The first type of patience, the patience that disregards the agent of harm, is practised in relation to something that harms oneself. There has to be some agent of harm, some agent that inflicts harm on us, and the first type of patience is practised in relation to that agent. The third type of patience, the patience of definite reliance on the Dharma, occurs during all types of Dharma practice. So, the second and third types of patience – the patience willingly bearing suffering and the patience of definitely

ascertaining the Dharma – occur during all types of Dharma practice.

For example, when one practises meditation, one has various types of physical suffering, such as thirst, hunger, and so forth. To be able to put up with these types of physical problems during longer periods of meditation, one needs the second type of patience, the patience that willingly bears sufferings. The type of mind that holds onto the object of meditation – the willingness to remain on the object of meditation single-pointedly – is the patience of definitely relying on the Dharma.

Another example is that, when students are at school, they need to have a certain type of patience during class. There are various types of physical difficulties one has to put up with, but one puts up with them, and allows the mind to remain single-pointedly on what the teacher has to say. As not everything the teacher says is the Dharma, this doesn't necessarily become the patience definitely relying on the Dharma, but basically the system is the same. Physically, one has to put up with different types of difficulties, and mentally one concentrates one's mind on what the teacher says.

Similarly, during Dharma practice, one puts up with all types of physical problems. That is the patience of willingly bearing suffering. Mentally, one concentrates one's mind on the object of meditation. That is the patience of definitely relying on the Dharma. In such a way, one will be able to overcome the various problems and get results from one's practice.

The patience of willingly bearing suffering is the road towards success and to alleviating suffering. If one is not willing to put up with difficulties and problems, one will not have success in whatever action one engages in. It is important for students and children to have this type of patience when following the advice of their parents. For example, if a parent advises their child to go to university, but the course takes 4, 5 years or even 10 years, after one year, certain types of may feel tired and complain to their parents that it's too difficult and that they want to give up, and so forth. The road to success is the patience willingly bearing suffering – being willing to put up with the difficulty of study and so forth. In such a way, one can have success later in life.

Otherwise if, during one's study years or school years, one is constantly distracted – one feels the need to go for a drink, then one goes for a drink and then goes here and there – one's study will not proceed very well, because one will be constantly be distracted and discouraged by the various difficulties one might encounter. Having this patience of willingly putting up with difficulties is actually the method to overcome and eliminate the difficulties.

That's a very short presentation of patience. It is important that you understand something about the practice of patience and put it to use. You shouldn't think that the practice of patience is only for Dharma practitioners or something you would only do in relation to Dharma and not use within your normal day-to-day

life. Even if you don't regard yourself as a Dharma practitioner, patience is very important in relation to different types of situations that are not necessarily to do with the Dharma. For example, in one's family life or in one's relationship with others it is important to practise patience, because if there's no practise of patience in families or relationships, then many disputes and fights will erupt, leading to disharmony and distrust. It is important to practise patience within the family and within relationships.

It is important that parents teach their children patience. First, parents should practise patience with each other, then teach patience to their children. They should practise those positive aspects and convey them to their children in a gentle manner. One's children will pick up one's bad habits naturally – they don't need to be taught. Parents should first practise the good habits, good behaviour and good thinking and then convey them in a gentle manner to the children. If parents are in the habit of fighting a lot and being angry, that will be picked up easily by a child. It is good for parents to remind themselves that they shouldn't pass on their bad habits to others, but should try to pass on good qualities and good behaviour, and try to teach their children about good things, good qualities, good ways of thinking, and so forth.

We can stop here. Maybe you have some questions? Next time, we can start on the perfection of enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is the antidote to laziness. The various perfections are antidotes. For example, the perfection of generosity is the antidote to greed, and the perfection of morality is the antidote to harmful behaviour or inflicting harm on others. The perfection of patience is the antidote to anger, and enthusiasm is the antidote to laziness.

If there's no questions, you can just remain in equanimity and I will not have to answer – that's the best thing to do! Normally, I tell my students that when they teach, they have to think about how to answer questions. One can't just think about what to say in a talk. One also has to prepare for answering any questions that might be asked. Even though that wasn't my intention, I just thought to remark on that *[laughter]*!

When two people with insight come together, from the insight of those two people further insight and wisdom can be generated. Therefore, it's good if we all come together in this manner.

Anyway, first of all sit in a good posture and relax. If you ask me questions, I benefit from your insight, because I receive some new insight from your questions. In the monastery, students who have already progressed to the highest level of classes, and even very senior Geshe, go to the very beginners' classes for the students who are 14 or 15 years old and debate with them, because they can receive benefit from their questions. They can receive a benefit from trying to answer the questions of those young students.

There is also a great benefit for the young students, because they can benefit from the wisdom of the older

monk. Those young monks are not the students of that particular higher Geshe, so there's no responsibility from the side of the Geshe. In the monastery, however, they do not think: "Now I have become a very advanced and knowledgeable Geshe, and therefore I'm too knowledgeable to debate with the new monks". They do not have this attitude. In the West, a university teacher would never go to an elementary school and try to answer the questions of primary students. Of course, it might depend on the wage they received. If they received a higher wage as a primary school teacher, they might happily want to change!

As explained before, sit in a good and relaxed physical posture and bring the mind back home, focusing it completely inwards. Then place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. In the monastery, they also say that good knowledge comes from what one hears from others.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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