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# *The Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*

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We can start by meditating a little bit as usual. Please sit in a good and comfortable posture.

Before meditating, one needs to generate a good motivation. The motivation is very important, because it means one's action is directed towards a good aim; on the basis of such a motivation, if one engages in an action, the action will also turn out well. Therefore, it is important that one continuously familiarises oneself with a good and virtuous state of mind when one is eating, socialising, working, going to sleep, getting up, and so forth. It is important that one does all activities with a good and virtuous mind.

We must regard our good, virtuous mental attitudes as an inner precious jewel and we must take care that we do not lose them. We must also take care to increase the good and virtuous mental states that we have already generated through meditation. Relying upon a good and virtuous mental state will provide one with refuge. One must rely upon something that is undeceptive and reliable in order to have success and to have a happy life. This virtuous and positive good mental state is such an undeceptive refuge on which one should rely. As we slowly increase our virtuous mental states and decrease the harmful mental states, we will become more familiar with virtuous, positive mental states, so that they become more powerful, and we as a person become happier.

Before we start our meditation, we should try to generate a good motivation, thinking about immeasurable love – wishing all sentient beings to be happy; and immeasurable compassion – wishing all sentient beings to be free from suffering. We should think that in order to bring this about, we will eliminate harmful and disturbing mental states from our continuum, and for that purpose, we will then engage in meditation. If we generate that type of motivation from the outset, it will already have brought the mind to a more non-conceptual or unobstructed state that is more suitable for meditation.

So, we bring the mind back home, not letting it be distracted towards external objects, but focusing it within us. After having focused the mind totally inside us, we place it single-pointedly on the coming and going of the breath. We will meditate in this way for a few minutes. *(Pause for meditation)* Arise from your meditative equipoise!

The great Atisha once remarked that “the greatest quality is a subdued mind”. Of all the various qualities one can achieve, having a subdued mind is the greatest.

One's good qualities should counteract the disturbed mind. Everyone has many qualities. However, the

question we must ask ourselves is: “Do the qualities I possess make my mind more subdued – do they act as an antidote against the disturbed states of the mind or not?”.

In terms of our qualities in relation to others, there are three possibilities: that another person has more qualities than oneself; that the other person's qualities equal one's own; or that the other person's qualities are less than one's own. If we meet a person who possesses equal qualities and we don't generate competitiveness, this is a sign that the qualities within our mind have had a good effect. If we meet someone with more qualities and we don't generate jealousy, again this is a sign that the qualities within one's mind have had a good effect. Similarly, if we meet someone with lesser qualities and we don't generate pride, this is a sign that the qualities within one's mind have had a good effect.

Disturbing mental attitudes bring suffering to the mind. So, since we don't want suffering, whenever we encounter someone with higher, equal or lesser qualities, if our mind is not disturbed, it will be protected from being unhappy. One must employ a method so that one's mind doesn't harm itself by generating negative attitudes, and destroying one's happiness. Because we don't want suffering, we should not let negative emotions arise within the mind.

If we see someone with higher qualities than us and start getting jealous, by understanding the psychology behind negative emotions such as jealousy, by understanding that this brings us mental unhappiness, when we feel the jealousy arising, we should immediately say to ourselves: “This is not such a good state. I shouldn't be jealous, that's a harmful state”. We should instead rejoice in the merits of the other person, thinking how good it is that the other person has those qualities and also thinking: “May I also be able to achieve those qualities”. We should direct the mind towards a positive way of thinking.

There are some situations – for example, in the course of one's Dharma practice or Dharma study – where a competitive attitude can be useful. If we don't study or practise very well and then see someone who does practise and study well, we should generate the motivation: “I should also study and meditate well”. Though, by definition, this is not competitiveness, having this type of mind can be useful. Otherwise, if other people study and practise well and we don't, we will receive a loss. So, in such a situation, it is good to be encouraged to study or practise.

The qualities and the knowledge one acquires should help to subdue the mind. Otherwise, if one just acquires knowledge and doesn't subdue the mind, many problems will arise – disputes and squabbles between religions and even within a religion. These problems come about because of jealousy, competitiveness and other harmful emotions. This is very harmful because it could also cause others to lose faith in their religion.

Therefore, it is important that we meditate again and again, familiarising our mind with positive and virtuous mental attitudes. For example, we should be able to

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recognise that doing a certain action may benefit ourselves but harm others. One should be able to recognise what is beneficial for oneself in the long run, and either abandon an action, thinking: "It is not appropriate to do this action, because even though it might benefit myself, it will harm many others", or: that: "Even though this action doesn't really benefit myself much, because it benefits many others, it is worth doing."

We can work with the mind and transform it by refraining from actions that harm the other person, negating the self-cherishing thought thinking: "I can't do that action, because even though it might be good for me, it's harmful for the other person". Or we can think: "Even though that action doesn't really benefit myself, it benefits the other person; therefore it is appropriate". So, one trains one's mind in discriminating awareness, the wisdom that understands what is right and wrong, what is beneficial and what is not.

It is important that one always treats others correctly and honestly. If you go through life treating others in such a manner, they will generate affection for you, and you will gain their respect and trust. Otherwise, if you don't treat other people correctly and are always unfriendly to them and so forth, it will make your own mind unhappy. It will also cause the other person to generate dislike for you, so they will be unfriendly to you, which in turn will make you even more unhappy – you will go from unhappiness to unhappiness. So, it is important that one goes through life treating people correctly and honestly.

It is important that you find a way of inter-relating with others, so that you can go through life inter-relating with others in a proper manner. Knowing the right way to act will also make your life more comfortable and bring happiness to others. It is important to discover the right way to act.

Geshe-la wants to thank everyone for attending to the classes and trying to practise well. And then he wants to wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. It is also important to go through Christmas not losing one's mindfulness, because if one loses one's mindfulness during Christmas and New Year, there is a danger that this will result in physical and mental suffering.

The Wednesday teachings start again on the 8th of January. The meditation that will be done then is the meditation on Tara, who is the embodiment of the virtuous activities of the Buddha. One should come there with a relaxed body and mind and, on the basis of this, one recites mantras and praises.

The person who will lead those classes is Allys. Allys is very knowledgeable and she has a very pure mind. She is also very skilful at presenting the Dharma – she is a very skilful teacher. If everyone comes to those classes, that would be very good.

It is very important to start the New Year in a good manner. This is why it would be good if you came to those meditations and make some new resolutions at the beginning of the year. Apart from trying to dress well and trying to catch up with people that one hasn't met

for a long time [at Christmas], one should also try to be kinder to others. It is important to start the year in a good manner, so it would be good to do those meditations classes.

I pray that also in the next year, we will all come together here on Wednesday, with happy and enthusiastic minds. And if I laugh at you, it is very good if you laugh back at me! *(Laughter)* If I laugh, but you stay prim, then that purpose hasn't been fulfilled! *(More laughter)*

As was explained in the beginning, bring the mind back home, focusing it totally inwards. Then place 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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