

Study Group - "Liberation *in the Palm of Your Hand*"

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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As a motivation first try to cultivate the genuine thought of seeking complete enlightenment to benefit all sentient beings, which is bodhicitta. Then think of putting into practice these profound Thought Transformation teachings which we are studying, since they are a cause to fulfil the ultimate goal of full enlightenment for the sake of all beings.

Of the main topics, which we have covered so far, we have finished the teaching on the Two Ways Of Training In Bodhicitta [heading 422.321] which are:

1. Seven-Fold Cause and Effect
2. Exchanging Self and Others

The teaching which follows this is How To Generate Bodhicitta By Relying On A Ritual Formula [heading 422.322]. This is the order in which the teaching is introduced in the lam rim. If we relate this teaching to our progress in our practice, then at the end of learning about the two methods of generating bodhicitta mind, we are supposed to have some experience of an artificial, fabricated bodhicitta. In order to transform this fabricated bodhicitta into a genuine bodhicitta, and to make our mind more acquainted with bodhicitta we [need to] rely upon some kind of ritual formula to generate this bodhicitta mind. However in terms of the order of teaching, this topic comes after the explanation of the deeds of a bodhisattva.

We shall note here that before the bestowing of bodhisattva vows we were taught about those vows, and the deeds related to those vows. This is contrary to the normal order, where the vows are explained after they have been conferred. This is the same as vows of personal liberation, which are explained after you have received them.

The Precious Benefits Of Bodhicitta

Here we should try to focus on the preciousness of the bodhicitta mind not just with our lips, but from the depths of our heart. We may have some understanding of the bodhicitta mind, but no matter what our level of understanding, it is important to experience just how precious and beneficial this mind of bodhicitta is, from the depths of our hearts.

It is the source of all excellent spiritual qualities of the Mahayana, or Great Vehicle; it is the most effective means of overcoming our deluded states of mind; and it is also the most effective means for reaching the state of buddhahood. Its importance is such that without cultivating bodhicitta in our mind, then no matter what practice in which we engage, whether the highest yoga Tantra practice of generation or completion stage, we shall not make any progress in our journey to the state of buddhahood.

We have to try to understand that even if we have not generated a fully-fledged bodhicitta mind, generating a genuine appreciation of bodhicitta can leave an imprint on our mind, so that the genuine bodhicitta can manifest in our minds in the future.

As a means to quickly achieve the state of buddhahood, or the means to quickly calm our mind, bodhicitta is the most effective and complete method. If we do not see that bodhicitta

is the answer to our problems, or to our quest for spiritual goals, then there is no hope for us. Try to understand that let alone being able to fully understand it, or even to cultivate bodhicitta, to have the opportunity to study it, or even hear the word 'bodhicitta' is so fortunate. We have to see its potential as the perfect means to calm our mind and to achieve the complete state of enlightenment.

422.33 Engaging In The Deeds Of Bodhisattvas

Although this bodhicitta mind is so precious and vital to our spiritual practice, just having cultivated bodhicitta is not enough. We must also engage in deeds of a bodhisattva. What follows explains the bodhisattva's deeds in two parts:

- a) The Six Perfections which are mainly to ripen one's own continuum.
- b) The Four Means of Gathering Disciples which are mainly to ripen the continuum of other beings.

422.331 Training In The Six Perfections In Order To Ripen Your Own Continuum¹

Firstly we list the Six Perfections and their six opposites.

1. The Perfection of **Generosity** with its opposite of **Miserliness**
2. The Perfection of **Morality** with its opposite of **Immorality**
3. The Perfection of **Patience** with its opposite of **Anger**
4. The Perfection of **Joyous Effort** with its opposite of **Laziness**
5. The Perfection of **Concentration** with its opposite of **Distraction**
6. The Perfection of **Wisdom** with its opposite of **Ignorance**

It is said that these Six Perfections include all of the deeds of the bodhisattvas, and this can be understood in two ways.

In relation to the ultimate goal of the bodhisattva on the path which is the state of a buddha's two bodies: the Form body and Truth body.

1. It is said that the two main tools to achieve these two bodies of a buddha are skilful means and wisdom. Skilful means is the main cause to achieve a buddha's *form* body and wisdom is the main cause to achieve a buddha's *truth* body.
2. Another way to explain the causes of a buddha's two bodies is in terms of the two accumulations - the accumulation of merit and the accumulation of wisdom.

We can categorise the Six Perfections for each of these two explanations.

1. For skilful means and wisdom:
 - the First to the Fifth Perfections are regarded as the skilful means
 - the Sixth Perfection is regarded as wisdom.

¹ Editor: this has three sub-headings:

422.331.1 The General Way to train in the deeds of the children of the victors

422.331.2 In particular, the way to train in the last two Perfections

422.331.3 How to train in the uncommon part of the teaching, the Vajrayana

2. For the two types of accumulations:

- the First to the Third Perfections are the accumulation of merit
- the Fifth and Sixth Perfections are the accumulation of wisdom
- the Fourth Perfection of Joyous Effort is common to both accumulations of merit and wisdom.

We do not have the time to go into much detail about each of these Six Perfections, but we shall try to cover some of it based on the explanation in Lama Tsong Khapa's *Lam Rim Chen Mo* or *Great Exposition on the Great Stages of the Path*.

Why There Are Only Six Perfections?

One aspect of knowing about the Six Perfections is knowing why are there just six bodhisattva's deeds? The following reasons are given.

First Reason: In Terms Of High Status Of Rebirth

The first reason is in terms of the high status of rebirth, which relates to all the necessary conditions and resources which we require in order to complete the bodhisattva's deeds, or even just to engage in them.

Completing the bodhisattva's deeds takes not just one life cycle but aeons of life cycles. Therefore, in order to find an opportunity and the right conditions to complete the bodhisattva's deeds, it is important to create all the necessary conditions and the resources for a long period of time.

We need [sufficient] material possessions, because without them we cannot engage in the bodhisattva's deeds. The practice of Generosity is the cause to gain these material conditions and wealth.

In addition we must also accumulate the excellent life in which to enjoy these excellent resources. The cause for obtaining that excellent life or body, is the practice of Morality.

Our practice also depends upon having good companions and friends, which comes through the Perfection of Patience.

The Perfection of Joyous Effort is cause to be able to complete the result of whatever action we undertake, and to see the result of that action. So the first four Perfections result in bringing about the four excellences of wealth, body, friends, and the completion of actions.

In addition to these four excellent conditions, bodhisattvas are not influenced by any mental delusion associated with those conditions. The Perfection of Concentration is the reason why these excellent conditions do not cause more delusions for bodhisattvas. Because of the Perfection of Wisdom bodhisattvas are not confused or misled in their deeds: the Perfection of Wisdom provides a clear guide as to what to adopt and what to abandon.

With this intelligent wisdom, your merit is never exhausted. Someone without wisdom will not create more merit. Rather they will only consume the fruits of the merit that they accumulated in the past, and when that has all been consumed, they fall into suffering. For a bodhisattva there is no such fate.

Second Reason: In Terms Of Accomplishing The Two Purposes

The six Perfections can be categorised in terms of two purposes - the purpose for oneself, and the purpose for others.

The first three Perfections fulfil a purpose for other beings. Generosity is giving material aid to the poor, and Dharma to those in need of Dharma. Through this Perfection of Generosity we extend help to other beings. Not only do you help others by engaging in generosity, but you also refrain from harming other beings through the Perfection of Morality, which is refraining from harmfulness. The Perfection of Patience is practised to endure, and not retaliate to any harm

you receive from other beings. These first three Perfections accomplish the bodhisattva's purpose for other beings.

The next three Perfections fulfil a bodhisattva's purpose for themselves. They fulfil the bodhisattva's state of happiness, which is the main cause for liberation. The main cause for liberation is the Perfection of Wisdom, but without the Perfection of Concentration the mind would be agitated and distracted. With such a mind it is impossible to achieve the state of liberation, so the bodhisattva engages in the Perfection of Concentration, and because of the Perfection of Concentration their mind becomes stable and immovable, [when placed] on an object.

If you fall into laziness then you cannot achieve the state of liberation, and this laziness is overcome by the bodhisattva's deeds of joyous effort. Therefore in terms of fulfilling the two purposes of the bodhisattva all the means are included in the six Perfections.

Further Teaching On Truth And Form Bodies

Is the Truth body a body? Normally 'body' is something solid. Can the mind be a 'body'? Yes, in the sense that it is a collection. The Tibetan equivalent for the word 'body' is *lu* which literally translates as 'a group of matter accumulated together'. So a body is many parts grouped together. The body is *lu* but we do not say the individual parts of the body such as the hand, or the eye are 'the body'.

It depends upon the connotation you attach to the term 'Truth body'. When you hear it for the first time would you think of it as something physical? Probably yes. A lot of translations of terms can give the wrong connotation so instead of English we can use the Sanskrit word *kaya* which is translated as body. Geshe-la thinks that this is a case where it is good to use Sanskrit, like the terms 'dharma' and 'samsara' which are widely known words that have become part of everyday language. Perhaps it is better if we use the Sanskrit term for body.

The term Dharmakaya means the Truth Body or buddha mind in the sense that it is the ultimate or true way of being, rather than this gross physical body.

Dharmakaya or Truth Body is divided into:

- **Wisdom Truth Body** which generally refers to a buddha's omniscient mind.
- **Nature Truth Body** which is the buddha's state of cessation, or abandonment of all obscurations.

The **Form Body** or **Rupakaya** is that which appears to the mind of ordinary beings, and to which we can visually relate. It is what we most often refer to as the Buddha. There are two types of form body:

- The **Fully Endowed Body** or **Samboghakaya** is the type of form body of a buddha which has five definitive characteristics. It is the first body in which a buddha achieves the state of buddhahood.
- The **Emanation Body** or **Nirmanakaya** which has various types:
 - o **Supreme Emanation Body**, which is the historical Lord Shakyamuni Buddha.
 - o **Birth Emanation Body**, which is the type of buddha's body which can manifest in various aspects.