

Study Group - “Liberation *in the Palm of Your Hand*”

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

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You have just meditated on bodhicitta, so now cultivate the same bodhicitta as your motivation for listening to and practising the teachings. If you do so, this can be a cause to further develop the bodhicitta mind.

As mentioned in the last teaching, having cultivated a bodhicitta mind one then engages in the deeds of a bodhisattva. There are two types of bodhisattva deeds: the Six Perfections to ripen one's own continuum, and the bodhisattva's deeds to attract disciples, or the Four Means of Gathering Disciples.

422.331.1 The General Teaching On The Six Perfections

We now start the general teaching on the Six Perfections.

At the moment we may not be practising any of the six Deeds of Perfection, however we should be trying to practise substitute forms of those Deeds. It is said that even substitute versions of the bodhisattva's Deeds of Perfection will accumulate enormous merit.

In discussing this topic of the Six Perfections we have to understand the two meanings of Perfection in terms of:

- The time when the causes are created
- The time when the results are created

422.331.11 The Perfection Of Giving

Definition

In **causal** terms the Perfection of Giving is the practice of generosity which includes these three elements.

1. the bodhicitta mind
2. the proper dedication
3. the wisdom realising emptiness.

These three qualities are necessary to qualify a practice of giving as a practice of the Perfection of Giving. They mean that the practice of the Perfection of Giving is not so much about the actual act of giving an object, as about the mind or thought of giving. So therefore the practice of giving means to cultivate and develop this thought of giving.

From the point of view of **result**, the practice of the Perfection of Giving only exists as a quality of a buddha. This literally means that we complete the Perfection of Giving only when we achieve enlightenment.

Obstacles

As mentioned previously, it is important to identify 'giving' as the thought of giving, and to cultivate that thought. By practising giving we are overcoming the mind of miserliness which makes us hold very tightly to our possessions. We can hold them so tightly that we do

not want to use them for ourselves, let alone giving them so that others may benefit.

Our own life experience shows us what miserliness does to us. The fears and worry it generates bring no happiness and satisfaction to our life, and we can see how different our experience of our possessions would be if we were not miserly.

Geshe-la says he does not possess any wealth. Certainly in his younger years, when he left his home country, he led the life of a beggar. When he looks back he remembers that he always found peace and joy in his mind. With freedom from miserliness, even a true beggar who owns nothing can live life in peace and happiness.

It is important to understand that as we discuss the practice of giving, we must not only focus on what it means, but we must know what hindrances we shall overcome by doing this practice. In this case the hindrance is miserliness which we must overcome because it is a cause of suffering which prevents us taking advantage of our possessions.

In brief we need to know:

- the definition of giving, which is the thought of giving
- the obstacle to our practice, which is miserliness.

Lastly we need to know how to practise giving.

The Practice Of Giving

To make our practice of giving the Perfection of Giving we must include the following causal elements.

The motivation for giving is to achieve buddhahood for the benefit all other beings. Our motivation for giving, therefore, should be bodhicitta: giving for sake of other beings rather for our own benefit.

The next factor is the **awareness of the nature of ultimate reality** in relation to:

- the recipient of our practice of giving
- the person who is performing the practice, ie you
- the substance which you give to others

The ultimate reality of these three is that they are all empty and lack inherent existence. If you have studied this view of emptiness, then here you try to think of the emptiness of these three.

At the end of the practice, the third factor is to **dedicate** to the cause of the practice, which is for it to be a cause to achieve buddhahood for the sake of all beings. Then whatever merit you have accumulated through this practice of giving will not be lost, but will become a

secure cause to achieve buddhahood.

As part of this practice of giving it is also important to recognise the faults and shortcomings of miserliness. Think of the problems it brings in life. Think of the many arguments people in relationships have about their wealth and possessions. It is all caused by their miserliness. When two people break up after having been in a relationship for a long time, some have so many problems when they divide up their wealth. This is all caused by miserliness in their minds. On the other hand others in the same situation have no problem in dividing up their wealth, as neither party is attached to their wealth, and so they ensure that each gets their fair share. In this practice of giving what we are trying to do is to develop the thought of giving to others, and the real obstacle is the mind of miserliness. It is important to overcome this miserly mind, and to do that we need to understand the faults of miserliness.

The Three Types Of Giving¹

[There are three types of giving.] In some texts the giving of Dharma is taught first, but here we begin with giving of material objects.

422.331.111 Giving Of Material Objects

The giving of our own body and material possessions are instances of giving material objects. The highest level of giving material objects is giving our own life, while the lowest level is to give eg a bowl of food.

Giving has to entail more than just giving material objects: it has to come from the genuine thought of giving. The initial emphasis of our practice should therefore be on trying to increase this thought of giving, and on allowing this thought to arise without any hindrances such as miserliness or attachment. We should try to reduce these hindrances by understanding the disadvantages of attachment to our body and other external material possessions, and to cultivate this thought of giving.

We should also contemplate the benefits of having the mind of giving. One benefit is that by becoming very familiar with giving now, we shall lose our attachment to our body, life and possessions. Then at the time of our death we shall experience less fear and mental suffering. Why should we bother about what we shall undergo at the time of death? Death is something which we all have to undergo. If we think about it now we can do some preparation, like this practice of giving, which will be of benefit at the time of death. The Yoga of Giving and Taking is a practice of giving which is very effective in habituating our mind with this thought of giving.

Our practice of giving will become a practice of the Perfection of Giving if we include the right motivation, understanding and dedication. Overcoming any attachment to the object we are giving can also be a cause to make our practice a Perfection. Then having given, it is important to not feel regret about having given an object. Not having attachment and so on can add some

¹ Editor: In some explanations there are four types of giving. The additional one not mentioned here is the Giving of Love. As Geshe-la later mentioned this Giving of Love is not mentioned here since love was extensively explained in the preceding sections on The Yoga of Giving and Taking.

quality of Perfection to our practice. We should also not have great pride in performing this great practice of giving.

422.331.112 The Giving Of Dharma

The giving of Dharma is something that anyone can do, because it involves the thought of benefiting others. With this motivation we give Dharma to others, and it might just be giving a few words or lines. There are no formal rules about performing this practice of giving Dharma - you can do it even in a casual conversation.

In order to give Dharma to others it is not necessary to be a Dharma teacher, so everyone has the opportunity to give Dharma to other beings. It is also possible to give Dharma by transforming your daily practice such as your daily recitation of prayers and mantras, or walking around the stupa, or reading Dharma texts. You do this by imagining that while you do your daily practice, the ground surrounding you is filled with sentient beings who have come to listen to the recitation. You can also imagine that even the air above you is filled with godly beings, who are in space because they do not like to be on the ground. If it is convenient, recite the words loud enough for others to hear. Including these visualisations makes your practice of recitation into the practice of giving Dharma.

In your visualisation, also imagine that as the sentient beings hear the words of Dharma from you, they become free of the suffering of mental delusions, and they experience the nectar of Dharma. Think of all the other sentient beings above and around you, and imagine that your recitation has the effect of removing their suffering, and that they experience bliss.

For the coming examination Geshe-la recommends these lines from *Seven-Point Thought Transformation*.

“Gather together the abridged quintessence of this advice.

Blend together the practice of one life with the five forces

The instruction for great vehicle transmission of consciousness is to apply those very five forces, lying in the perfect position.”

This compulsory question is from the fourth point “Consolidating a lifetime’s practice into one.”

Headings with outline numbering are derived from the Text. Headings without outline numbering are derived from Geshe Doga’s commentary.

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Note on authentication

The original typescript is prepared by Kathi Melnic from Alan Molloy’s original transcript, which has been checked against Damien Busby’s notes. Adair Bunnett then checks the typescript against a tape recording, and edits the text, which is finally checked by Alan Molloy.