

killing an insect which is biting our body. So this practice of preventing harm to other beings is also the practice of Giving Fearlessness.

Now we can clearly see the benefits which this practice of giving can give both to our own life, and also to the world. It is a great cause of securing peace and harmonious conditions in the world. So we should try to do whatever we can to practise it.

We should not allow ourselves to be discouraged if we cannot practise something that is very difficult because we are not ready, and then not do any practise at all! Rather we should think "If I cannot do one aspect, then what else can I practise?" and then do that. If, in day-to-day life we cannot always act according to the spiritual teachings, we should at least always have an appreciation of them, and some wish to practise them. We should pray at all times "May whatever actions I do in this life benefit other beings, and never be a cause of harm to others", as it is important to remind oneself not to create any harmful action, and create only beneficial ones.

We do have the potential to always engage in actions of benefiting others. It is just that we have not yet familiarised ourselves with such actions, or the thought of helping others. We can look at other beings for examples of lives of dedication to the service of others. They may not be religious-minded, yet they have this incredible compassion, and the determination and courage to undertake acts of bravery.

Geshe-la saw a television report about a flood in South Australia. There was a small child being carried away by the current of the flood. There were many onlookers, but one large, strong man put his life at risk, jumped into the water and rescued the child. Many of those who were watching may have had compassion, but they did not have enough determination and courage to actualise that compassionate wish, and jump in the water.

We can understand that to achieve a worldly goal we need courage and determination. In spiritual practice too, not only do we need to generate compassion and the thought of benefiting others, but at the same time we need to develop the courage and determination to actually put our thoughts into action.

In the text it says that the 'Perfection of Giving' means a practice of Giving which has reached its fullest development. The practice of Giving mainly refers to the intention to give, such as giving one's body, one's material possessions or one's root virtues, and to give from the depth of one's heart, without any sense of miserliness. It becomes the Perfection of Giving when such a thought of giving is fully developed, and perfect.

Our practice of giving reaches to the state of perfection when this thought or intention of giving reaches perfection. Then we have fully developed the capacity to give. For example, if we have the thought to give in relation to our body, then we would have the capacity to actually give our life and body. Until we actually have the capacity to give our body, we have to mentally train ourselves. In other words, until that time, for us the practice of giving means to develop and intensify this thought or intention of giving for example, our body.

How do we develop our intention to give? For example in relation to the practice of giving our body or material objects, we meditate on the impermanence of these things. Not only are they subject to decay and disintegration, but at the time of death we have to leave them all behind. They become useless, and we are even separated our own body.

So before you have the actual capacity to give, the main practice of giving is training the mind. However at the same time we should not think that our only practice is [restricted to] developing this true intention to give from the depths of our heart. We should also think of giving any object we have the resources, capacity and desire to give. So our practice of giving is training the mind in the practice of giving, as well as giving the things that we can give.

As said earlier, it is the motivation of giving which is the most important factor in giving. A student once told Geshe-la about how he had given some money to a beggar who said that he needed money for a train ticket. The student was unsure as to whether the beggar would in fact buy alcohol. Whatever the intention of a beggar, as a way of familiarising yourself, it is important to get into the practice of giving. Even if it is something small, it shows that the action you have done is a worthy one.

Geshe-la said once, as he was returning from India, he stayed in an upper Tantric college hotel in Delhi. As he walked out of the restaurant late in the evening, he saw someone sitting on a flat stone looking very sick. This person's friend said that he desperately needed the money to travel to Rajpur. As he was about to leave India, and would not need Indian currency, Geshe-la gave the beggar his last 65 rupees. On returning to the hotel, a Gyuto monk told Geshe-la that that person would only use the money to buy drugs. On a subsequent trip Geshe-la thought he met the same beggar asking for money, and when Geshe-la said that he had given him money last time, the beggar said "No it was not me." Who knows? The point here is that it is still worthwhile from your side, as long as you maintain a pure motivation, to not let the person who begs to go away empty handed.

Of course there are certain exceptional situations. You do not give poison or weapons to a suicidal person, with which they could kill themselves.

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.