
The Six Perfections

༄༅། །ཐེགས་པ་ཚེན་པོ་སྐྱེ་ལ་བསྐྱབ་ཚུལ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

21 May 2019

As usual we begin with a short meditation.

[*Tong-len meditation*]

Try to cultivate the right motivation, generating a thought to benefit other sentient beings, and ensuring there is no self-centredness in it. We should listen to the teachings with a genuine aspiration to benefit others as our motivation.

Last week we discussed the meaning of anger and we also talked about the shortcomings and disadvantages of harbouring it. After this, the text explains the shortcomings of anger in terms of the way it destroys or damages the root of virtue.

It says:

Some scholars' position: "The meaning of destroying the roots of virtue is that in destroying the capacity of previous virtues to issue their effects speedily, you delay the issuance of their effects. So anger, for instance, will give its effect first, but it is certainly not the case that the seeds of the roots of virtue will not issue effects when they later meet with the requisite conditions, because, given that no mundane path can eliminate the seeds that are to be eliminated, it is impossible to have an elimination of the seeds of the afflictions."

The text then gives a reply to that critique:

Reply: This reasoning is unsound because (1) even the purification wherein ordinary beings clear away nonvirtue by means of its remedy, the four powers of confession, is not an elimination of its seeds; nevertheless, though the seeds of this nonvirtue may later meet with the requisite conditions, they cannot issue a fruition; (2) even virtuous and nonvirtuous karma that are spent upon issuing their individual fruitions do not lose their seeds; nevertheless, even when the seeds of such karma meet henceforth with the requisite conditions, it is impossible for fruitions to arise; and (3) when you attain the peak and forbearance levels of the path of preparation [the second and third of four levels], you do not eliminate the seeds of nonvirtue that cause wrong views and miserable rebirths; nevertheless, even though the seeds of this nonvirtue may meet with the requisite conditions, they cannot give rise to wrong views or a miserable rebirth.

First of all, we need to be clear about the point being made by some scholars when they say *the meaning of destroying the roots of virtue is that in destroying the capacity of previous virtues to issue their effects speedily*. The question relates to the meaning of the destruction of the roots of virtue, by the force of anger for example. Some scholars assert that it means delaying the yielding of the ripening result of the root virtue. Their assertion implies that destroying the root virtue means annihilating or eliminating its seed. This, they say, is not the case because the root virtue will produce its result later when it meets with the right conditions.

Then the text gives a summary of the reply.

Furthermore, the reasoning is unsound because, as the earlier citation [Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Knowledge Auto-commentary*] says:

As to the actions that give rise to cyclic existence,
There are those that are weighty, those that are near,
Those to which you are habituated, and those you did
earliest.

Among these, the former will ripen first.

This citation indicates various factors that determine the chronological order in which various karmas yield their result. It says, for example, that the karma which is most weighty or most powerful, whether it be virtuous or non-virtuous, will produce its result first. If the virtue is more powerful then it will produce its result ahead of non-virtue. As the text says:

Any virtuous or non virtuous action that comes to fruition does temporarily stop the opportunity for the fruition of another action;

Both virtue and non-virtue cannot produce a ripening at the same time. So, at a time when a virtue actualises its ripening result, the repining result of non-virtue will not arise. However, this doesn't mean that the virtue has damaged the non-virtue. It simply means that the ripening result of non-virtue has been delayed. Likewise, if the ripening result of non-virtue is produced first, that will postpone the virtuous result, rather than a case of a virtue being destroyed. Therefore, saying that the meaning of non-virtue destroying virtue from the angle of non-virtue destroying the seed of the virtue is not a valid reasoning; however, it is not said nor can it be established that a mere preceding fruition destroys virtue or nonvirtue.

You learnt about the meaning of the line *As to the actions that give rise to cyclic existence*, when you studied karma and its results. Under the topic of karma, there is a section which talks about the weight of karma, and the factors that determine which karma will produce its result before other karmas. For example, if someone is close to death, then, as it says there, the karma which is heaviest or most powerful will ripen its result first. If all the karmas are equal in weight at that moment, then the karma which is created nearest to that moment will ripen its result first. If that too is equal, then the karma with which he or she is most habituated will take priority. If the habituation is also the same, then the one he or she has created first will produce its result first. This explains the meaning of the citation quoted above with respect to the order in which karma ripens its result – which karma ripens first, and which karma ripens its result later.

From this explanation of karma, we understand how important it is for us to habituate our mind with a positive mental attitude as much as possible, such as the thought of wishing other sentient beings to have happiness, and be free from suffering, thinking 'I will only benefit other sentient beings and will never harm any other beings both in thoughts and deeds.' If we familiarise ourselves with virtuous states of mind by cultivating them again and again, then they will become more forceful and powerful. As a result, they will arise and produce their results easily. As we become more habituated with positive mental attitudes, it doesn't take any great effort for us to engage in virtuous practices.

Even just a small reminder from some friend would be enough to trigger us to engage in virtuous practice. For example, when Susan Coates, who was a Tara Institute member, passed away her familiarity with Tara practice helped her at the time of her death. She was very weak and could not respond much, but when Sandra visited her and told her that I had advised that she do the Tara practice, she understood that and expressed her thanks for that advice and became very calm. If we become very familiar with a practice, then it will only need a very small effort to engage in that practice. The support that Sandra gave her helped Susan to create the cause to find a good rebirth and help her to prevent bad rebirth.

The best way friends can help support each other is in developing virtue and positive qualities. If we are not careful, then, instead of helping our friends to cultivate positive qualities, we could be a very negative influence on them. As much as possible we should try to translate whatever we achieve or have in our life into a cause of virtue, because what we all seek is happiness which results from virtue.

We all have some fixed idea about what happiness means to us. We believe that happiness means having the right friends, plenty of wealth, a good-looking body and so forth. Accordingly, we pursue these things with a great deal of self-sacrifice. Therefore, it is important that when we attain those things we make sure they actually do serve as cause of happiness and support for our spiritual practice. Everything, such as our friends, our health, our wealth etc., has the potential to bring us happiness and be a cause to increase virtue. However, if we are not careful, then instead of bringing happiness and increasing virtue, these very things that we have worked so hard to accomplish, turn out to be a continuous source of suffering for ourselves and others, both now and in the future.

So it is important that we thoroughly check what we believe in and try to see where that belief is taking us, and whether holding that belief is beneficial or not. For example, some people believe that if they find the right person they will be truly happy. However, if they get too obsessed with that belief, they will continue to suffer for as long as their desire remains unfulfilled, and along the way they are also shutting themselves off from many other good opportunities in life.

What we have got to remember is that we want happiness and do not want suffering. Happiness results from virtue and suffering results from non-virtue. Therefore, we must also remember to cultivate a virtuous state of mind and habituate our mind with it, and on the other hand, diminish non-virtuous states of mind and break up their habitual patterns within ourselves. In this way, we can find more peace and happiness, both now and in the future.

The text continues:

Therefore, concerning this the master Bhavaviveka states (as already explained) that in the case of both the purification of nonvirtue by the four powers of confession and the destruction of roots of virtue by wrong views and malice, the seeds of the virtue or nonvirtue cannot give rise to effects even though they may later meet with the requisite

conditions, just as spoiled seeds will not give rise to sprouts even though they may meet with the requisite conditions.

The main point here is that when we purify non-virtue through applying the four opponent forces, purification means preventing non-virtue from producing its main results. In a sense, the purification has the effect of destroying the capacity of the seed of non-virtue or sterilising it so that it cannot produce its result.

So, purification of non-virtue doesn't mean completely abandoning or annihilating the seed of non-virtue. If a non-virtue is purified, then its seed is damaged. Just like damaged or rotten seed won't be able to produce a sprout, so too the purified non-virtue won't produce its main result. From this we should also understand how anger destroys the root virtue by preventing the desirable or pleasant ripening results of virtue from arising.

Then the text continues:

Moreover, as already explained, even though you cleanse your accumulation of sins through purification by the four powers, this does not contradict the fact that you are slow to produce higher paths.

As a benefit of purification practice, you prevent the result of negative actions from arising, however *it does not contradict the fact that you are slow to produce the higher paths*. It doesn't mean that your negative actions have not slowed down your progress on the path. In other words, despite purification, a particular non-virtue can delay one's journey on the spiritual path. This refers to an instance where someone who is not declared as a bodhisattva generates anger towards someone who is a declared bodhisattva. In this context, it is said that the person can purify the anger, however, the anger will still have the impact of slowing down speedy progress on the path.

So, we can see here how we can purify non-virtue and thereby stop the ripening result, but there are certain non-virtues which can be still be a cause to delay our spiritual realisation and progress on the path, even though we have purified them. We must be very cautious about not engaging in such non-virtues. This is important!

Now the text says:

Accordingly, for some persons anger destroys, for instance, their resources and excellent body - the respective effects of giving gifts and safeguarding ethical discipline, but is unable to destroy their ability to easily produce roots of virtue again through giving gifts and safeguarding ethical discipline by means of the causally concordant behavioral effect of their habituation to generosity and an attitude of abstention.

Here, the text goes into more specific results of virtue and non-virtue. For example, there are two types of karmic results called the ripening result and the result similar to its cause. It is saying here that destroying a root virtue doesn't necessarily mean that all the types of the result of the virtue are stopped from producing results. We could have instances where the ripening result is prevented from manifesting, but not the result similar to its cause and *vice versa*. In the context of the practice of giving, the primary or ripening result is gaining wealth. If anger destroys the virtue of giving, the result is that you won't gain wealth. Nonetheless, this doesn't mean that you will

not produce a thought of giving as a result similar to its cause from your habitual practice of giving. Similarly, a thought of moral restraint can still arise as a result similar to its cause with respect to your habitual practice of moral ethics, even if anger has caused damage to the ripening result of your moral ethics. This is the meaning of the words *by means of the causally concordant behavioral effect of their habituation to generosity and an attitude of abstention*.

The text continues:

For other persons, anger destroys the continuous occurrence of a similar type of causally concordant virtuous behavior like ethical self-discipline and so on but does not destroy the occurrence of an excellent body, resources, and so forth. Some [bodhisattvas] realize a path through which they progress to perfection within one eon, for instance, if they do not generate anger toward a bodhisattva who has obtained a prediction of his or her upcoming enlightenment (as explained earlier). If they produce a single angry thought toward such a bodhisattva, this path is not expelled from their mind-stream, but their progress on the path becomes slow for the length of an eon.

We touched on this point a bit earlier. It is saying here that if a bodhisattva on the path of accumulation generates anger towards a bodhisattva who has been predicted to achieve complete enlightenment, they won't go backwards on the path, however the length of the time needed to move onto the next path could be doubled – if the bodhisattva needs to accumulate merit for over an aeon in order to enter the next path, they will now need to accumulate the merit for two aeons.

In brief, just as in the case of the purification of nonvirtue there is no need to purify every behavioral effect, so with respect to the destruction of virtue there is no need to destroy every behavioral effect. However, as this is important and as it is critical to analyse it using the scriptures of the unique Buddha and the reasoning based on them, you should research the scriptures well and do an analysis.

It is said that generosity results in wealth, while moral ethics result in a happy rebirth and so forth. But the link between the cause and the effect is extremely subtle and difficult to understand. Gaining such an understanding of cause and effect requires us to rely on the Buddha's own words and other valid scriptures, and also we need to apply three modes of analysis to verify the validity of those scriptures. Therefore, it is very important that we study Dharma well and then think about and analyse what we have learnt to deepen our understanding.

The text continues:

Thus, the invisible faults of anger are that it projects its own fruitions, which are extremely unpleasant, and that it prevents the arising of the measureless very pleasant fruitions of its opposite [virtue].

This is saying that it is extremely difficult to recognise the various undesirable or unpleasant ripening results of a moment of anger. Likewise, it is also extremely difficult to recognise the extent to which anger destroys the desirable or pleasant results of virtue, and this is something beyond our normal perception. So, we need to further deepen our Dharma knowledge in order to transcend our perception and awareness.

Now the text turns to the visible faults of anger.

The faults of anger visible in this lifetime are that you do not experience a peaceful and good mind; ...

The moment anger arises we lose all mental peace and happiness.

... the joy and happiness that you had previously perish, ...

Whatever joy and happiness you had before will be all gone.

... and you cannot regain them; ...

Anger prevents joy and happiness in the future.

... you cannot sleep well; ...

It even spoils your sleep.

... and you weaken the stability wherein your mind stays calm

Your capacity to remain calm and think clearly will also be affected.

It is important for us to reflect upon all these shortcomings before anger arises and overpowers us. If we reflect on all these shortcomings it will really help us to be more cautious about allowing anger to arise, and also a sense of fright will arise within us even at the prospect of the approach of anger.

Then the text continues:

When you have great hatred, even those for whom you formerly cared forget your kindness and kill you; even friends and relatives will get annoyed and leave you; although you gather others with your generosity, they will not stay; and so on. *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* states:

In the grasp of the mental pains of hate,
Your mind does not experience peace,
You do not find joy or happiness,
Sleep does not come, and you become unstable.

Even those who depend on a master
Who cares for them with wealth and services
Will overcome and kill
A master who gets angry.

His anger disheartens friends.
Though he gathers people with gifts,
They will not serve him. In brief,
No angry person is happy.

The *Garland of Birth Stories* also says:

When your complexion is spoiled by the fire of anger,
You cannot look good, though adorned with jewelry.

If we think about our own experience, we will see how very true these words are.

You may sleep on a good bed, but
Your mind suffers the sharp pains of anger.

You forget to achieve goals beneficial to yourself;
Tormented by anger, you take an evil path.
You ruin the achievement of your aims and your good name.
Your grandeur fades like the waning moon.

Though your friends love you,
You fall into an abyss of wrong.
Weakening your intelligence about what is helpful and what is harmful,
You mostly transgress and your mind becomes confused.

Through anger you are accustomed to sinful acts,
So you suffer for a hundred years in miserable realms.
What harm greater than this could be done

Even by enemies avenging the great harm you have done?

This anger is the inner enemy;
I know it to be so.
Who can bear
Its proliferation?

Meditate until you are firmly convinced that grave consequences such as these arise from anger.

So as said before, it is important to reflect on the harm, damage and destruction anger does to our ourselves and others when we let it overpower us. Try, as much as possible, to reflect on this until you have a clear and strong understanding of anger as being a very harmful and destructive force.

The text then says:

Thus, *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* says:

There is no sin like hatred
And no fortitude like patience.
Therefore, earnestly cultivate
Patience in a variety of ways.

First, understand the benefits and faults, and then strive to cultivate patience in many ways. The reason behind the first line is set forth in Candrakirti's *Explanation of the "Middle Way" Commentary*.

You cannot measure the fruitions of anger, just as you cannot measure the water in the ocean with a balance scale. Therefore, for projecting unpleasant effects and damaging virtue, there is no sin greater than a lack of patience.

This indicates the amount of damage that anger causes to our virtue, as well as the undesirable ripening results that the anger produces. The shortcomings of anger are really beyond measurement.

For, although other sins result in extremely unpleasant fruitions, they are not great sins on that account alone, given that they do not destroy roots of virtue.

This is saying that not only does anger have the capacity to produce great suffering but at the same time it can damage the roots of virtue. Furthermore:

Still, there are many wrongs other than anger that combine both production of a terrible fruition and destruction of the roots of virtue:

As well as anger there are the other negative states of mind, such as wrong view, which also have a destructive force.

... wrong views that deny cause and effect; abandoning the sublime teachings; generating pride in relation to bodhisattvas, gurus, and the like and thus terribly belittling them; and so forth. You can know of these from the *Compendium of Trainings*.

Having discussed the faults of anger and so forth, the text then goes onto how to meditate on patience.

(c') The divisions of patience

We will continue with this next week.

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett
Edit 2 by Sandup Tsering
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute