

# The Six Perfections

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

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We will begin with the usual meditation. [*Tong-len meditation*]

Try to reinforce your motivation for listening to this teaching which is really to extend benefit and happiness to all sentient beings.

Chelsea requested an explanation of Tara and Chenrezig mantras. To fulfil that request, I will briefly explain Tara's mantra tonight, but I'll leave the explanation of the Chenrezig mantra for another time.

The Tara mantra is OM TARA TUTTARE TURE SOHA. The word 'mantra' is a Sanskrit word, translated in Tibetan as *sNgag*. Mantra has two syllables 'man-' and '-tra', which together means protecting the mind from ordinary perception and apprehension, and from fear and suffering. Lama Tsongkhapa uses 'protection' from the point of view of protection from suffering. If you refer to *The Heart Sutra*, it also implies the meaning of 'mantra'.

Going into further detail, there are relative and ultimate mantras. In relation to the Tara mantra, the ultimate mantra refers to Tara's all-knowing exalted wisdom. The relative mantra refers to the sound and syllables of mantra that are recited. By relying upon the repetition of the relative mantra, we will get closer to the realisation of the definitive or ultimate mantra, the omniscient mind of a Buddha.

In Tibetan, Tara is called Dolma, which means 'liberator'. As a deity of compassion, Tara is called a liberator because she has liberated limitless sentient beings from cyclic existence.

OM is normally used in the beginning of mantras to symbolise the beginning or source of everything. The Sanskrit word OM comprises three letters, A-U-M, and in written Sanskrit, we see a dot or drop on top of the vowel AH - this symbolises the MA. So AUM symbolises the qualities of the holy body, speech and mind of a deity such as Tara. It said that if we repeat this sacred syllable, it will leave a positive impression within us to achieve the qualities of holy body, speech and mind.

TARE means liberating from cyclic existence; TUTTARE, liberating from all types of fears, such as natural disasters and wild animals; TURE, freeing from diseases and suffering; and SOHA means to stabilise in the path. In relation to Tara being called a liberator of cyclic existence, fears etc, there are many accounts of Tara to illustrate this. If you refer to the Praises to Tara - called Lek-dri-ma in Tibetan - you will understand more about Tara as a Liberating One.

So, taking into account the meaning of Tara's mantra, when we say it we are effectively taking refuge in Tara as

our liberator and protector. It is important that, when we say the mantra, we generate unwavering faith in Tara as our refuge object or protector and make a fervent supplicating prayer to her.

(1") Stopping impatience with those who prevent your happiness and with those who cause you to suffer

(a) Showing that anger is unjustified

(2) On analysis of the subject, anger is unjustified

Last week we stopped at:

Therefore, just as you tolerate bleeding or burning as a treatment to cure a severe illness, it is appropriate to bear small sufferings for the sake of preventing great suffering.

These lines from the text present a very good example: in order to be healed or cured of a severe disease, as part of the healing process or cure, we have to be patient with any pain associated with the treatment, which may involve the burning or cutting of our body. By tolerating the pain of the treatment, we can overcome the disease and thereby more pain in the future.

The implication here is that we should get used to tolerating minor harms that we receive from others. In that way, we are avoiding major loss and pain in the future. However if, instead of tolerating it, we lose our temper and generate hatred towards others, we will be creating the cause for much greater suffering in the future.

When other people, whether they are friends or not, do something unpleasant or undesirable to us, if we can tolerate it in the first place, then that will be the end of it. By tolerating some harm or unpleasantness that we receive from others, we will prevent a greater amount of suffering for ourselves and for others; whereas, by not tolerating it, we create the cause for greater suffering in the future.

The practice of patience is the most effective remedy for counteracting anger and hatred. To be motivated to practise patience, we need to think about the shortcomings of anger and, on the other hand, the benefits of practising patience. Even if we find it difficult to prevent anger arising, if it does arise and we make an effort to practise patience, we can at least prevent that anger from fully overpowering or controlling us.

For example, when anger arises, in the very next moment you can remain vigilant and aware of the shortcomings, damage and harm that anger would bring, or you can think of the virtue of practising patience. By doing this, it is possible to stop anger from further increasing in the next moment. That's what the text is saying here; we also talked about this earlier.

If you think about the shortcomings of anger, you will recognise it as one of the most powerful causes of destroying your mental peace and happiness. Also, it is very destructive in terms of its very negative impact on you as a person, on your good human nature and personality. Therefore, we should make an effort to at least minimise or decrease anger, as well as to reduce its control over us.

(3) On analysis of the basis, anger is unjustified

On analysis of the basis, anger is unjustified has two parts:

1. Analyzing the causes of harm and where the fault lies
2. Analyzing your commitment

**(a') Analyzing the causes of harm and where the fault lies**

*Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* says:

His sword and my body  
 Are both causes of suffering.  
 He obtained the sword, I obtained the body;  
 At which should I be angry?

This verse points out that, really, the object experiencing the pain is your body. The cause of that pain is the instrument or weapon used by the other person. So the text is just asking, at which do you direct your anger? Should your anger be directed at this body that experiences the pain, or at the weapon or instrument used to cause that pain?

The text continues:

If, blinded by craving, I have obtained  
 This abscess with a human form,  
 So painful that it cannot bear to be touched,  
 With whom should I be angry when it is hurt?

This indicates that the nature of our body is subject to pain and suffering. It is similar to someone affected by a disease that causes the skin to fall off; even a gentle touch to the skin can cause them excruciating pain. These lines are saying that the body we have acquired is in the nature of such suffering. They are also saying that craving blinds us to it – that, despite our body having this nature of being easily harmed and thus susceptible to pain, we are still very attached to it. We can't even tolerate a tiny ant biting us.

So this verse raises the question, if it is in the nature of our body to experience suffering and pain, why we are so attached to it?

The next verse reads:

If some people, out of confusion, harm others  
 While others in confusion get angry with them,  
 Who is blameless  
 And who is to blame?

This is indeed true. When we think of those who cause harm to others, the cause for them to do such harmful actions is related to their ignorant, confused state of mind. Due to that confused or ignorant state of mind, they can even kill other beings. Additionally, for those who receive the harm, the cause of not being able to tolerate receiving harm is also related to their ignorant, confused state of mind.

The particular type of confusion referred to here is ignorance of the law of cause and effect: of not knowing that virtue results in happiness, and non-virtue results in unhappiness. By being completely blind to the truth of the law of cause and effect, people harm others and also retaliate against others who harm them.

**(b') Analyzing your commitment**

Develop the fortitude of patience, thinking, "It is wrong for even *sravakas*, who act for their own purposes alone, to be impatient and get angry..."

So, in terms of fulfilling their spiritual goal, it is even inappropriate for *sravakas* – whose main aim is to fulfil

their own spiritual goal – to lose their temper or be impatient and become angry.

... So of course it is wrong for me. I committed myself to achieving the benefit and happiness of all living beings when I generated the spirit of enlightenment. I act for others' welfare and care for all beings."

This clearly reminds us that, in having cultivated the bodhicitta mind, we have resolved to work for the benefit of all sentient beings. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, if it is wrong for someone who is seeking their own spiritual goal to be impatient with others, what need is there to mention those who have committed to work for the welfare of all sentient beings? It is wrong for them to be impatient with others.

As the text says here, when you generate the spirit of enlightenment, you have genuinely aspired to achieve supreme enlightenment to benefit all sentient beings. Having generated the aspiration for supreme enlightenment, to fulfil the welfare of all sentient beings, you then take the bodhisattva precepts and resolve to engage in the bodhisattva deeds of the six perfections, as well as the four means of gathering others. Therefore, you need to practise patience.

Also, Bo-do-wa said:

The Buddha's teaching is to commit no sin. When you fail to cultivate patience with a slight harm, you make the curse, "May this eradicate the teaching." Thereby you give up your vow, and this eradicates the teaching. We do not have the teaching as a whole; when we break our vows, we dissipate what we do have.

When we talk of the Buddhadharma, we are referring to the Dharma that exists in the world or within ourselves. The implication here is that the personal Buddhadharma existing within ourselves is more important. Even if the Buddhadharma exists in the world, it doesn't exist within us if we go against the Dharma, such as transgressing our spiritual precepts, and so forth. In that case, we are depriving ourselves of the Buddhadharma and also causing the decline of the Dharma. So *we dissipate what we do have*.

And also:

When a yak has been saddled up for carrying goods, if the saddle tightens around his tail, he bucks, and the saddle beats against his legs. If the saddle is loosened, the straps drop, and the yak is happy. Similarly, if you do not relax around a harmdoer, the harmdoer matches what you do, and you steadily become more unhappy.

**(b) Showing that compassion is appropriate**

In this section, Lama Tsongkhapa is saying that not only should we stop retaliating or being impatient with others, but we should be really cultivating compassion for them. It shows here how we can arouse compassion within ourselves:

Contemplate from the depths of your heart, "All living beings have been in cyclic existence since beginningless time, and there is not one who has not been my friend and relative – father, mother, etc. Being impermanent, they lose their lives and are miserable due to the three types of suffering. Crazed by the demon of the afflictions, they destroy their own welfare in this and future lives. I must generate compassion for them. How could it be right to get angry or to retaliate for harm?"

So we reflect upon the situation of all other sentient beings – that there is no certainty about our past relationships with them, in terms of their having been our friends, enemies or strangers since beginningless time. Also reflect upon the fact that all beings are in the nature of impermanence; therefore, they are all subject to death sooner or later. They will soon be separated from their present lives.

Further, they are all subject to the three types of suffering. Not only that, but their minds are completely under the influence of mental afflictions. Due to this, not only are they suffering, but they also don't know what is beneficial or harmful in the immediate and distant future.

If we reflect on these points, we will be able to give rise to a sense of compassion. Then there will be no way for us to feel animosity towards others. We will be able to cultivate an unbiased compassion. As implied here, there is no certainty about our relationship with others. There are no grounds for us to feel close to some beings with attachment; nor feel aversion towards others, seeing them as something distant; nor feel indifference towards others, feeling neither close nor distant. If we take what is mentioned here as a way to generate compassion, then our compassion will be unbiased and impartial.

This reminds us that we need to make a deliberate effort to cultivate compassion towards those whom we view as an enemy or a stranger. Compassion and love towards beings we feel close to will arise naturally, whether that closeness is the result of a family connection, or physical attraction, or whatever it is. There is little need for us to make an effort.

However, we need to put effort into showing compassion towards enemies and strangers. As mentioned here, to generate compassion for our enemies, we need to consider that they are no different from our present friends; in the past, they were also our friends. The fact that we see them as an enemy now doesn't mean they have always been our enemy. We can see they are no different from our friends. So we make a deliberate effort to generate compassion towards all beings.

## **(2") Stopping impatience with those who prevent your praise, fame, or honor, and with those who have contempt for you, or say offensive or unpleasant things to you**

Stopping impatience with those who prevent your praise and so forth, and with those who have contempt for you and so forth has two parts:

1. Stopping impatience with those who prevent three things – praise, fame, or honor
2. Stopping impatience with those who do three things to you, have contempt for you, or say offensive or unpleasant things to you

### **(a) Stopping impatience with those who prevent three things – praise, fame, or honor**

Stopping impatience with those who prevent three things – praise, and so forth has three parts:

1. Reflection on how praise and so forth lack good qualities
2. Reflection on how praise and so forth have faults

3. The need to delight in those who prevent praise and so forth

### **(1) Reflection on how praise and so forth lack good qualities**

When others praise you and spread your fame, it serves neither of two purposes: for this life it does not bring you long life, health, and the like, and for future lives it does not bring merit and so forth. Essentially the advice is how to prevent the feeling of hurt or losing one's temper because of some other who is causing harm to one's fame, reputation, good name. Therefore it points here about if you reflect really on what is the advantages of having good name or fame.

If you think about the benefit of having a good name and reputation in this life or in the immediate future, as Lama Tsongkhapa points out here, does it cause you to live longer or help improve your health? Of course, there is no such benefit. Likewise, in terms of your future life, will fame help you to create or increase merit? Of course it has no such benefit. The text continues:

Therefore, do not get attached to fame and praise, but reproach yourself by thinking, "My displeasure when my praise and fame are ruined is no different from when small children cry upon the collapse of their sand castles, which lack any of the requisites for a dwelling."

A child's sandcastle has no real purpose. It doesn't provide shelter, but if it is damaged, the child or children who built it can become upset and cry. The text is saying we should regard damage to one's good name and reputation in the same way.

*Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* states:

Praise, fame, and honor  
Do not cause merit, nor longevity,  
Nor cause strength, nor health,  
Nor bring physical well-being.  
Once I understand my own welfare,  
What meaning is there for me in those?

This verse shows the practice of the bodhisattva: by applying this way of thinking, a bodhisattva never loses his or her temper, or feels hurt by their name or reputation being damaged. Harm to their name and fame doesn't cause harm to the mind of the bodhisattva. Otherwise, as it says here:

And also:

When their sand castles collapse,  
Children cry in great distress.  
Likewise, my mind is childish  
When my praise and fame are ruined.

### **(2) Reflection on how praise and so forth have faults**

Develop disgust for praise and so forth, thinking, "Praise, fame, and honor distract my mind with the meaningless, destroy my disenchantment with cyclic existence, make me jealous of those with good qualities, and spoil my virtuous activities."

Here, one overcomes desire for praise and fame by thinking about the shortcomings of praise and so forth. As it says here, *praise, fame and honour* can serve as a cause of great distraction. We see people who become popular, getting invited here and there, and becoming distracted from what they are supposed to be doing. And *destroy my disenchantment with cyclic existence* is the effect on one's renunciation, the thought of wanting to free

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oneself from cyclic existence. Praise, fame and honour also *make me jealous of those with good qualities, and spoil my virtuous activities.*

So when we think about the shortcomings of fame, it helps us not to lose our temper or feel impatient with those who harm our good name.

*Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* states:

Praise and so forth distract me,  
Destroy my disenchantment,  
Promote my jealousy of those with good qualities,  
And destroy all that is good.

### **(3)) The need to delight in those who prevent praise and so forth**

This section shows, in fact, there is reason to feel joy and take delight when others harm one's fame or prevent one receiving praise, and so forth. Reflect on this.

Stop your anger and feel delight from the depths of your heart, thinking, "In that case, damage to my praise, fame, gain, and honor protects me from going to miserable realms, cuts the bonds of my attachment, and, like the Buddha's blessing, blocks the door through which I am about to enter into suffering." Thinking like this, you should from the depths of your heart stop anger and feel happy.

This provides a different and more positive way of looking at damage to one's reputation.

*Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* states:

Therefore, are not those involved in destroying  
Praise of me and the like  
Engaged in protecting me  
From falling into miserable realms?  
  
I diligently seek freedom  
And do not need the bonds of gain and honor;  
How could I get angry  
With those who free me from bondage?  
  
I am about to descend into suffering,  
But, like the Buddha's blessing, they are  
Giving me an opportunity to avoid it.  
How could I be angry with them?

### **(b)) Stopping impatience with those who do three things to you have contempt for you, or say offensive or unpleasant things to you**

This is the next heading.

We are now going to recite the Samantabhadra Prayer for Jools Gardner's mother, who is apparently unwell. Jools is one of the oldest students and members of this centre. We will also dedicate the prayer for the wellbeing of Helen Sinnema.

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