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# The Six Perfections

འདྲེན་པ་ཆེན་པོ་སྤྱི་ལ་བསྐྱབ་ཚུལ།

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As usual we begin with a short meditation. [*Tong-len meditation*]

Now, please try to establish the right motivation.

## 2' The method of developing joyous perseverance (c'') Based on the elimination of unfavorable conditions and the accumulation of favorable conditions, being intent on joyously persevering (cont.)

We stopped last time at this paragraph:

In summary, you must study and discern well what bodhisattva training requires you to adopt and to cast aside, and then joyously persevere at continuously being mindful in all your conduct of what you have understood about what to adopt and what to cast aside. Hence, it is extremely important not to err about that at which you are to persevere.

If we want to bring about true peace and happiness within us, we must direct our mind towards thinking over the meaning of this paragraph and then put it into practice. Then we can really achieve the true happiness and peace that we seek. As it clearly states, we should have a clear understanding of what to accept and what to reject in terms of both our Dharma practice and everyday life. In terms of our Dharma practice, we have to direct our joyful effort towards cultivating a virtuous state of mind through mindfulness. There is no question that what we seek is true happiness and the only way to achieve this is to cultivate a virtuous state of mind.

When the text refers to *being continuously mindful*, it's talking about how to make stable progress in our practice through cultivating, retaining and increasing a virtuous positive state of mind by continuously applying mindfulness. What is mindfulness? It is not forgetting the object of the mind, which has the function of non-distraction. Here it is a state of mind that enables us to remember a virtuous object thereby allowing us to familiarise ourselves with virtue.

We should also focus on that last line, which says, *hence, it is extremely important not to err about that at which you are to persevere*. This emphasises knowing exactly where we should be directing our energy and joyful effort. We all consider ourselves to be Dharma practitioners and we all follow meditation practices. Just like everything else that we do in our life, the goal of our Dharma and meditation practice is also to achieve happiness and to avoid suffering. So finding happiness is our goal in following the Dharma; in fact, it is the goal of all spiritual practitioners.

For example, those who follow the hearer (shravaka) and the solitary realiser (pratyekabuddha) path, aspire for the happiness of liberation from cyclic existence. Whereas those on the Mahayana path aspire for the all-knowing state of enlightenment. Similarly, spiritual practitioners on the small stage of the path aspire for the happiness of a higher rebirth. Therefore, if we aspire to achieve human happiness, we must be born as a human being and to achieve the

happiness of liberation we must achieve the state of liberation.

So, what are the causes and the conditions for a human rebirth? Well, the main cause for human rebirth is refraining from the ten non-virtues and practising the ten virtues. Therefore, we have to practise mindfulness and introspection, which is the key to living an ethical life thereby fulfilling our aspiration to continuously find a human life, and reach the awakened state of Buddhahood in order to benefit all motherly sentient beings.

Applying mindfulness and introspection means being fully aware of right and wrong actions, what to do and what not to do. This means, for example, being aware of the fact that killing and stealing are extremely negative actions. It also means being aware that if we happen to commit any non-virtuous action, we should purify it by applying a remedial force.

This is how we need to see the benefit of maintaining mindfulness and introspection in our spiritual practice.

In terms of our spiritual goal, I don't know about you but if it is to achieve the state of liberation, then I can say that this is something that I won't be able to achieve in this life. So, if we are not able to achieve the state of liberation in this current life, then we must come back with a human life of leisure and endowment again and again until we achieve that state of liberation. That's the reason the first topic of meditation in the lamrim treatise is on the rarity and meaning of the human life of leisure and endowment.

We must learn the Dharma and we must also put it into practice. In the end it is the progress we make in our practice that will lead us to achieve our spiritual goal. When we practice, we will gain a sense of achieving our goal and living life meaningfully. We frequently hear 'extract the essence of the precious human life and don't waste it'. We should remember this at all times.

What does taking the essence of a human life mean? First of all, we need to recognise and acknowledge the fact that we are so fortunate to have found this human life of leisure and endowment. We are fortunate because in addition to this precious human life we are surrounded by favourable external and internal conditions. Externally, we have met with all the favourable conditions such as a perfect teacher and the Mahayana teachings, and internally we have found a human life of leisure and endowment and possess a mind endowed with discriminating wisdom. Therefore, we must make the best use of this favourable condition and not waste it.

How do we make this life meaningful? We must practise the Dharma because the Dharma brings us true happiness both now and in future. It is said that if, through practising the Dharma we create all the necessary causes and conditions to obtain such a human life of leisure and endowment again, then we have rendered this life meaningful, at least at a basic level.

## (d'') How to use joyous perseverance to make the mind and body serviceable

To continue with the text:

The method for using joyous perseverance to make the mind and body serviceable is the power of mastery. Santideva sets forth in the chapter on conscientiousness [in his *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds*] the necessity of learning the bodhisattva trainings; the extremely grave consequences if you do not train in these once you have

pledged to do so; how to regard the afflictions as the enemy; and the ways to generate the courage that looks upon the hardship of battling the afflictions as an ornament rather than as a burden. Meditate on these before taking up the task of training in the bodhisattva deeds. Thus stopping all the inhibitions that prevent you from using your body and mind for virtuous activity, rise gladly to that task.

*Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* says:

In order to have strength for everything  
Before engaging in any activity  
I will recall the advice on conscientiousness  
And then gladly rise to the task.

If you read these lines slowly and contemplate their meaning, you should be able to understand them. Essentially, they explain why we need to achieve the state of mental and physical pliancy, which we studied earlier under the topic of calm abiding. The benefit of achieving both mental and physical pliancy is that they overcome mental and physical states of unserviceability, which prevents our mind and body from engaging in virtue. Then the text raises a question:

*Question:* What form will the joyous perseverance produced by such efforts take?

Gaining this state of serviceability of mind and body will not only make our practice easy, but it will also be very effective and powerful. The text continues:

*Reply:* Just as wind drives a piece of cotton to and fro, a joyful energy, enthused for virtue, controls your body and mind.

To illustrate the meaning of the previous lines, the text uses an analogy of how the wind can easily move a piece of soft cotton. Likewise, we need to gain the ability to easily direct or engage our mind and body in virtuous practices. This in turn makes our efforts to practise very effective.

The text continues:

When you act along with this energy, joyous perseverance is well-established. Once you produce this, you will easily achieve all the collections.

Here, the text is talking about a very special kind of joyful effort, one that is infused with the mental and physical pliancy that allows us to mentally and physically engage in virtue naturally and easily. It is also implying that if we make an effort, we can accomplish anything. As it says, *once you produce this, you will easily achieve all the collections.*

Here, the term 'collections' refers to the two accumulations of merit and wisdom. As you study you must reflect upon the meaning of any terms you come across. For example, when you hear the word 'accumulation' you should immediately remember there are two accumulations, as well as further details about them. The text continues:

*Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* states:

Just like cotton under the power  
Of a wind that blows to and fro  
So I will be driven by enthusiasm;  
In this way I will accomplish all.

Although such tasks are difficult, it is wrong to give them up.

The advice here is that we should not lose our courage or give up by thinking or saying that a task is too difficult.

Rather, as the glorious Matrceta's *Praise in One Hundred and Fifty Verses* says, you must make effort:

"The sublime state, difficult to reach,

Is not attained without hardship."

Knowing this, you intensified your joyous perseverance  
Without concern for yourself.

This is quite self explanatory. In order to achieve *the sublime state*, the state of buddhahood, we have to overcome all hardships by continuously making an effort. As the text says, it is *difficult to reach* this sublime state. *Knowing this, you intensified your joyous perseverance without concern for yourself.* These two lines recollect the life of the Lord Buddha and all the hardships and sacrifices that he made in order to reach the full state of supreme enlightenment.

#### (d') How to practice

You must practice any kind of joyous perseverance in association with the six supremacies and all six perfections. The generosity of joyous perseverance is establishing others in joyous perseverance after you have stabilized yourself therein. The remaining perfections are in accord with the earlier explanation.

Just as with the other perfections, you can also incorporate all of the six perfections into the perfection of joyful effort, for example, giving joyful effort. This means that just as you develop joyful effort, you also cause or inspire others to practice joyful effort too.

The text then says, *the remaining perfections are in accord with the earlier explanation.* Here we have the *six supremacies* and so forth, which we've already covered in our discussion of the preceding perfections. These also apply to the perfection of joyful effort.

#### (e') A summary

The recollection and cultivation of the spirit of enlightenment—the basis of the bodhisattva deeds—inspires you to train in order to set all living beings in joyous perseverance. So steadily increase this spirit, and then aspire to and train in the methods of joyous perseverance for those at high levels. Also, strive as you are able at the methods of learning joyous perseverance for a beginning bodhisattva. In particular, effectively stop the various forms of discouragement, ...

This relates to the various forms of laziness, like the laziness of procrastination, and the laziness of indulging in inferior activities, and so forth.

... these being uniquely subject to elimination by joyous perseverance. Mentally put on the armor of joyous perseverance that is enthusiastic about the following: the goal of enlightenment, the aim of accomplishing the happiness and eliminating the suffering of all living beings, the very long period of time, the limitless collections, and the immeasurable hardships.

Here the text talks about the necessity of putting on the armor of joyous perseverance in order to achieve *the goal of enlightenment*, and *the aim of accomplishing the happiness and eliminating the suffering of all living beings*, which takes a *very long period of time*. This indicates that you need to put on the joyful armour of enthusiasm because the journey to supreme enlightenment takes a very long period of time, *limitless collections*, and *immeasurable hardships*.

The text continues:

Strive at this attitude because, as the *Questions of Subahu Sutra* says, just by generating the powerful surge of such a resolve, you accumulate a great wave of merit. If you do not do this, you fail to secure your Mahayana lineage, and you are also continually stained by much wrongdoing.

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Next:

Then, in other lives as well, you will find it very difficult to learn the bodhisattva deeds. Also, after you have become aware of such things, even if you do not practice perfectly, motivate yourself in that direction.

Here, the text acknowledges our lack of ability, by saying *after you have become aware of such things*, i.e. understood what has been just said here, *even if you do not practice perfectly, motivate yourself in that direction*. Don't give up but try to direct your interest in the same direction. So, it's saying that even if you are not, for whatever reason, able to really practise perfectly, or practise precisely as instructed, then at least motivate yourself in that direction.

The text continues:

If you then joyously persevere to the extent that you are able, then, as the *Questions of Subahu Sutra* says, you will quickly complete the perfection of joyous perseverance in future lives, without suffering and with little difficulty.

Even if you are not able to fully and precisely put into practice what is said here, you should still try your best. The benefit is that whatever effort you make now will serve as a cause to make your practice easier in the future.

## THE PERFECTION OF MEDITATIVE STABILIZATION

### (v) How to train in the perfection of meditative stabilization

The explanation of how to train in the perfection of meditative stabilization has five parts:

1. What meditative stabilization is
2. How to begin the cultivation of meditative stabilization
3. The divisions of meditative stabilization
4. How to practice
5. A summary

#### a) What meditative stabilization is

Meditative stabilization is a virtuous, one-pointed state of mind that stays fixed on its object of meditation without distraction to other things.

This explanation of meditative stabilisation is in accordance with that given in the *Bodhisattva Levels*.

The *Bodhisattva Levels* says:

It is the one-pointed state of mind-stabilized on virtue, and either mundane or supramundane-of bodhisattvas who have first studied and reflected on the bodhisattvas' scriptural collections. Whether it is oriented toward meditative serenity, toward insight, or toward both as the path that conjoins them, understand that this one-pointed state of mind is the bodhisattvas' meditative stabilization.

Meditative stabilisation refers to a single-pointed state of mind that is not affected by any distractions or mental agitation. The *Bodhisattva Levels* describe such a single-pointed state concentration as *meditative serenity* or calm abiding, or special *insight*, or a state which is the union of calm abiding and special insight.

Meditating well depends on how well you can contemplate the topics you choose. How well you contemplate depends on how well you understand the topics through listening or studying the scriptures. The *Bodhisattva Levels* clearly states the necessity of combining all three, - listening, contemplating, and meditating - not just one to the exclusion of others. This is, in fact, one of the unique instructions of the Kadampa masters. The more knowledge you have through listening, the more there is for you to

contemplate, and the more there is for you to contemplate, the more there is for you to meditate on.

When the *Bodhisattva Levels* states *whether it is oriented toward meditative serenity, toward insight, or toward both as the path that conjoins them*, it is talking about both serenity, which is calm abiding and special insight. Obviously, the union of calm abiding and special insight is different to the union of method and wisdom.

What makes special insight special or superior to calm abiding is that in addition to the bliss of pliancy being experienced through the force of the single-pointed concentration, the special insight in the bliss of pliancy arises through the force of the wisdom analysing the object of the meditation as well. We'll stop here with these words:

And *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* also says:

Having thus generated joyous perseverance,  
Set your mind in meditative concentration....

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*Edited Version*

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