
The Six Perfections

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

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We begin with our usual meditation.

[Tonglen meditation]

Since you have all learnt about the bodhicitta mind, you should now cultivate it as a motivation for listening to this profound teaching.

Tonight, I will give a short teaching and after that, we will recite the *King of Prayers* for Liam's father who has passed away. Please remember to dedicate all the merit accumulated by us and others throughout the past, present and future.

We will continue from the section called:

(b') How to give

This section deals with the manner of giving. As the text states:

First of all, smile with a beaming countenance and then give to any recipient, showing respect by speaking honestly. Give with your own hands, at the appropriate time, without hurting anyone else, and bearing the suffering of any hardship.

The manner we should express while performing the act of giving is, as it says, *to smile with a beaming countenance*. Giving with a smile, and a clear positive facial expression is none other than good social manners, and that's what is being emphasised here. Even just offering a cup of tea to others is an act of giving. Accordingly, we should do so in accordance with the manners stipulated here, which includes holding the cup with both hands; offering with one hand is considered bad manners even in the conventional world.

Then it says *give with your own hands, at the appropriate time, without hurting anyone else*, which implies giving respectfully. We should show our sincere respect for all beings when offering things to them. We should not show respect and courtesy only to those who we consider as important, while not doing the same for others. In fact, it is said that even if we are giving food or drink to a dog, we should do so with all the good manners presented here.

The text continues:

The result of these actions is described in the *Chapter of the Truth Speaker (Satyakaparivarta)*:

By charity out of a sense of service, you will receive service from others such as your relatives; by using your own hands when giving you will obtain people who serve you; by giving when appropriate you will accomplish your aims on time.

Essentially this explains the result of the act of giving, which is gaining wealth and possessions in the future. From this, we need to recognise that the good living conditions and the wealth that we possess at the moment are the result of our practice of giving in the past.

Saying *give with your own hands* emphasises that we accrue more merit if we give directly with our own hands rather than giving indirectly by having someone else do it for us. This applies to making offerings too; there is more benefit in

making offerings directly with our own hands and effort. The late Gyarong Khensur (ex-abbot) Rinpoche was renowned for his practice of making offerings with his own hands. *Giving when appropriate* indicates the greater benefit of giving at the right time, such as giving food to someone who is very hungry or helping someone who is suffering. As a result of giving on time, *you will accomplish your own goals on time*.

Then the text continues:

By charity without hurting anyone else you will obtain stable resources; ...

Here, *obtain stable resources* means resources that are long-lasting and sustainable.

... by giving while bearing unpleasantness you will have intimate companions.

We all wish for an intimate companionship with others. Bearing unpleasantness while giving will bring intimacy in your relationships with others in terms of fostering mutual love from the depth of each others' hearts. It doesn't just refer to your relatives.

Then the text continues by referring to Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Knowledge* which clarifies the above passage.

Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Knowledge (Abhidharma-kosa)* states that from giving charity with your own hands you get a vast amount of resources. The *Treasury of Knowledge Auto-commentary (Abhidharma-kosa-bhasya)* explains that "stable resources" means that others do not interfere with them and that fire, etc. does not destroy them. Furthermore, there is a way to help others to be generous. If you have some belongings, go to the homes of stingy people who have no experience of giving gifts even a few times. Joyfully and in a relaxed manner direct them as follows: "I really do own a vast amount of things. I want some people to ask me for things so that I can complete the perfection of generosity, so if you meet some people who ask you for something, rather than turning them away without giving them anything, take from my wealth and give it to them. Or else lead them to me, and then rejoice in my generosity."

This passage is self-explanatory. It explains how you can inspire other stingy beings to be generous to others, and to practise generosity. The text continues:

This does not destroy their wealth, ...

You can leave your things with stingy people for them to give away to those in need or ask them to refer those in need to you. In this way you can engage these stingy people in the act of giving because *this does not destroy their wealth*. In other words, they don't have to give away their own things.

... and they do this with pleasure. In this way they plant the seed for the removal of their stinginess.

However, they do *implant a seed for the removal of their stinginess*, and so they will eventually give away some of their small things. After that they will slowly get used to giving more and more things as their attachment to things becomes less and less. The text continues:

Contingent upon this, they will reach a moderate absence of attachment, and contingent upon that, a great absence of attachment. In like fashion, give belongings to your abbot, master, students, and friends who have a lot of attachment and are incapable of giving, and to those who are not like that but have no belongings, and then cause *them* to make

offerings to the three jewels, rather than doing it yourself.

Here, the text is saying that you can also motivate your abbot, teacher, students and friends who are incapable of giving because of strong attachment to their belongings. Similarly, you can also help those who don't practise giving because they do not have any possessions or things to give away. The way you can help them is by handing over your things to them and requesting them to make offerings to the Three Jewels on your behalf.

By doing this you produce a great deal of personal merit. It pacifies the afflictions of some, fulfils the desire to practice the teachings in others, gathers beings around you, and causes them to mature.

This shows how the bodhisattvas act to ripen the mental continuum of other beings.

Then:

Similarly, if you have no belongings, you may build up wealth through a craft or a job, and then give it away.

If you do not have any wealth or belongings to give, you can offer your services to others as a gift to them.

Or else you may tell others a religious story in which even the poor or miserly wish to give.

This touches on the giving of Dharma to others. If you do not possess any material object or any job skills, then you can give a Dharma teaching. By giving Dharma you can inspire even those who are poor or stingy to engage in the practice of giving.

Then the text continues:

Alternatively, send those reduced to begging to the houses of rich persons who have faith, and go there yourself to assist in the giving of gifts to the extent that you are able.

If you do not have anything to give at all, then, as suggested here, you could refer the recipients to other generous wealthy people. Not only that, but you can also accompany the recipients and be there to assist with the giving.

Also, as you sort through the material goods for charity, give the better first and always give away completely all the goods presented for charity.

This instructs us that when it comes to giving, you shouldn't only give things that are of no use to you while keeping all of the best, valuable and most useful things for yourself with a great deal of attachment. Instead of this, we should be giving the best to others and also give away all the things that we have put aside for charity. We shouldn't put things aside to give away, and then not give them away at the actual time of giving. We should give away all of the things we have put on our list of things to give away.

(4) Things to give

The explanation of the things to give has two parts:

1. Brief presentation of the things which are and are not to be given
2. Detailed explanation of the things which are and are not to be given

We'll stop the teaching here.

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