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# The Six Perfections

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As usual we begin with a short meditation.

[Tong-len meditation]

We cultivated the proper motivation when we recited the refuge and generating bodhicitta prayer, and we should reinforce the same motivation for listening to the teaching.

The refuge prayer begins with, *I take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha until I achieve enlightenment. By gathering the spiritual accumulation through practising giving and so forth, may I achieve the state of buddhahood to benefit all sentient beings.*

You have heard the explanation of this prayer many times in the past. Essentially, in this prayer it clearly shows the objects of refuge, which are the *Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.*

When it says, *I take refuge until I achieve enlightenment*, this implies the taking of the Mahayana refuge. The term, *enlightenment* can either refer to the state of dharmakaya to be achieved, or to present-day Bodhgaya, the place where you achieve complete enlightenment. The *I* in *I take refuge*, implies the person who is taking refuge.

The last two lines of the prayer are, *By gathering the spiritual accumulation through practising giving and so forth, may I achieve the state of buddhahood.*

It is important to understand the meaning of the prayer so that you can contemplate its meaning as you recite the prayer. Some Tibetan versions use the word *by gathering the accumulation of merit*, instead of just saying *the spiritual accumulation*. His Holiness the Dalai Lama suggests that it is better to say, *By gathering the spiritual accumulation through practising giving and so forth*, and in that way the accumulation includes the accumulations of both merit and wisdom.

As it says in the prayer, the way you gather two accumulations is through *giving and so forth*, and here *so forth* refers to the rest of the six perfections.

The words *to benefit all sentient beings* implies that the reason you gather the spiritual accumulation is to benefit other beings. There are two aspirations: an aspiration to accomplish the welfare of other beings, and an aspiration to accomplish one's own welfare. So *to benefit all sentient beings* implies the purpose for which you gather the accumulations and the aspiration to accomplish the welfare of other beings.

The word *buddhahood* implies the aspiration to accomplish one's own welfare. These two aspirations are in fact the main elements of the definition of bodhicitta, the mind of enlightenment.

The words, *may I* indicate the actual generation of the bodhicitta mind, and the way it is generated here is in the form of an aspirational prayer.

There's no clear indication of the scriptural source of this verse, because you can't find it in any sutras or scriptures. The source is attributed to Atisha as this verse of taking refuge and generating bodhicitta has been a very common prayer in Tibet from the time Atisha introduced Buddhism to Tibet.

Now we will continue with the commentary. Last week we stopped at this section called:

## (c') The divisions of patience

The section on the divisions of patience has three parts:

1. Developing the patience of disregarding harm done to you
2. Developing the patience of accepting suffering
3. Developing the patience of certitude about the teachings

Then the text goes into detail about each of these three types of patience.

### (1') Developing the patience of disregarding harm done to you

This is further explained through two subheadings.

1. Stopping impatience with those who harm you
2. Stopping both dislike for harmdoers' attainments and delight in their troubles

Of course, the text goes into great detail about these two headings. But for the time being let's reflect simply on the outline of the subject matter. We will find such a reflection quite challenging as it strikes at our normal views and attitudes. Normally, we hate to see harm doers experiencing any success or goodness. We feel jealous about their success and accomplishments because we dislike them and feel they don't deserve to have anything that makes them happy. As some other lamrim teachings say, the greater their success the more jealousy we feel and the greater our feelings of dislike and animosity. As it says here, *we delight in their troubles*. Normally, we are delighted and pleased to see harm doers in difficulty, facing defeat or disgrace. So the outline *stopping both dislike for harmdoers' attainments and delight in their troubles* diametrically opposes our normal mental attitude.

If we think about it, many of our normal attitudes serve as an unnecessary source of suffering for ourselves. Feeling jealous about the success or goodness of others is not a pleasant feeling at all. Instead of feeling animosity and dislike about their attainments or success, we should try to feel positive and good about their attainments by cultivating love and compassion towards them.

If we have cultivated an unbiased, impartial compassion for all beings, without any discrimination between friends, enemies or strangers, then instead of feeling dislike and hostility we will rejoice in the success of other beings and feel empathy when they are in difficulty and want to help them.

Now we return to the text.

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## (a") Stopping impatience with those who harm you

Stopping impatience with those who harm you has two parts:

1. Stopping impatience with those who prevent your happiness and with those who cause you to suffer

These outlines used by the great Tsongkhapa reflect his own practice. Here, the topic is how to engage in the practice of patience as a remedy to overcome and prevent anger. We normally become angry when others cause harm to our happiness or when they cause us problems and suffering. Imagine being able to apply the practice of patience to both of these two circumstances and see that there is no cause for anger. Tsongkhapa has encapsulated the whole practice of patience as an antidote to anger into one line. How amazing!

The second subheading of this section is:

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

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

Stopping impatience with those who prevent your happiness and with those who cause you to suffer has two parts:

1. Showing that anger is unjustified
2. Showing that compassion is appropriate

Under these two outlines we find further details about how to engage in the practice of patience in situations where someone who prevents our happiness or causes us to suffer.

### (a) Showing that anger is unjustified

Showing that anger is unjustified has three parts:

1. On analysis of the object, anger is unjustified
2. On analysis of the subject, anger is unjustified
3. On analysis of the basis, anger is unjustified

#### (1) On analysis of the object, anger is unjustified

Here the anger is on the basis of the object.

It has four parts:

1. On analysis of whether the object has self-control, anger is unjustified

This is looking at whether the harm doers, who are the object of our anger, have self-control or choice about harming us. It concludes that if they have no choice then our anger is unjustified.

2. On analysis for either adventitiousness or inherency, anger is unjustified
3. On analysis of whether the harm is direct or indirect, anger is unjustified
4. On analysis of the cause that impels the harmdoers, anger is unjustified

#### (a') On analysis of whether the object has self-control, anger is unjustified

Analyze, thinking, "What would be reasonable grounds for anger toward harmdoers?" Whereupon, you might think, "They first had the thought of wanting to harm me, prepared the method, and then either prevented my happiness or inflicted unpleasant physical or mental suffering, so my anger is justified."

If we read these lines very closely and think about their meaning, we will see their logic and how rational they are. With *Analyze, thinking*, "What would be reasonable grounds for anger toward harmdoers?" we see that our justification for anger evolved from our recognition of how a harm doer initially had an intention of harming us, and then engaged in various harmful actions which spoil our happiness or brought suffering upon us. As the text says, the scenario in our mind to justify our anger, hostility and impatience towards harm doers is thinking, "They first had the thought of wanting to harm me, prepared the method, and then either prevented my happiness or inflicted unpleasant physical or mental suffering, so my anger is justified."

Then the text continues:

Are you angry because they inflicted harm while they had the self-control not to harm you, or are you angry because they were utterly without any self-control and hurt you while helplessly impelled by something else?

This raises the question of whether, in this scenario, we are angry because the harm doer had self-control or had a choice not to harm us and chose to inflict harm, or because they had no self-control and so inflicted harm on us.

The text is saying that our anger on the grounds that the harm doers had the self-control not to harm us is unjustified. First of all, it is wrong to assume that the harm doers had such self-control. Secondly, the harm that we receive is not simply dependent on whether or not the harm doers have a thought to harm us. Even though we may think that they have self-control, if we actually take their true situation into account, we can understand that they lack self-control. We can also understand that there are many other facets to the cause of harm in addition to the intention of harm doers.

The text says:

In the former case, your anger is unjustified because those who inflict harm do not have control over themselves, for, when the conditions and causes – seeds left by afflictions to which they were previously habituated, ...

Here the text is saying the harm doers have no self-control because they are overpowered by mental afflictions and the seed or propensity of the affliction within them, due to their habituation with the afflictions. Then:

... a nearby object, ...

This indicates other necessary causes and conditions of harmfulness. And next:

... and erroneous conceptions come together, they give rise to the thought to harm, ...

The terms *habituated*, *a nearby object*, and *erroneous conceptions* refer to the necessary causes for mental afflictions to arise, as described in the *Abhidharma* teaching.

The *erroneous conceptions come together* refers to the subtle confused or mistaken state of mind that we have. With this underlying *erroneous conception* or confused state of mind, people perceive the object of harm as being very negative, unpleasant, unattractive and undesirable, and this in turn *gives rise to the thought of harm*. Next comes:

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... even though the harmdoers do not think, "I will feel malice"; ...

We normally think that people harm us because they hold harmful mental attitudes towards us. The text is saying here that there is more to the cause of harm than just harmful thoughts. If all the causes and conditions of the harm are present then the result will be harm, even though the harm doers do not want to harm us. Whereas if the causes and conditions are incomplete, then harm will not occur *even though* they might think 'I will feel malice.'

The text continues,

These causes and conditions produce the desire to harm; this in turn produces the work of harming; and this produces suffering for someone else, so those harmdoers do not have even the slightest self-control. Moreover, they have become like servants of their afflictions, because they are under the control of others, i.e., their afflictions.

This clearly states that the eventuation of harm is not just a matter of someone's thought, rather it's a matter of all the causes and conditions coming together. It is only when these come together that harm will eventuate; if they do not come together no harm will eventuate. When all the causes and conditions are present then the desire to harm arises, and this desire to harm naturally propels the person to undertake harmful actions without any choice on their part. *So those harmdoers do not have even the slightest self-control. Moreover, they have become like servants of their afflictions, because they are under the control of others, i.e., their afflictions.*

If we reflect on the situation from this angle, then we can clearly see the very good grounds for feeling compassion towards these harm doers. The text continues:

In the latter case ...

This refers to the question of whether the person is utterly without any self-control, as indicated earlier in the text.

... you are angry because the harmdoers are utterly without any self-control and, being helplessly impelled by something else, they hurt you then your anger is totally unjustified.

This is quite self-explanatory. If the person who harms us totally lacks control, lacks freedom, and lacks choice about their behaviour, then we are unjustified in showing anger; rather we need to have compassion for them. In fact, if we reflect on the sequence of cause and effect, then we see how, when a person is completely overpowered by anger, they naturally lose their self-control and are completely controlled by the mental affliction of anger. When we reflect on their helplessness, then we are more likely to show compassion for that person.

The text continues:

For instance, some people who have been possessed by demons and have come under their control may wish to hurt those who are helping them to get free of their demons and thereupon beat them, etc. However, their helpers think, "They do this because their demons have eliminated their ability to control themselves," and do not have even the slightest anger toward them. They then strive to the best of their ability to free them from their demons. Likewise, when bodhisattvas are hurt by others, they think, "They do this because the demons of the afflictions have eliminated their

ability to control themselves." Without being even the slightest bit angry with those persons they then must generate the spirit of enlightenment, thinking, "I will strive at the bodhisattva deeds in order to free them from these afflictions."

When a person is completely possessed by some sort of evil spirit, or has become insane, then they will lack any ability to recognise who is helping them, and who is not helping them. So they will even attack those who are helping them. However, the person who is helping won't react with anger because they understand the true situation of the person they are helping.

This, the text is saying, is how the bodhisattvas view those who cause harm to them. They feel compassion and empathy for the perpetrator of harm. The blame for the harmful actions lies directly with the mental afflictions and not the person, because the person is completely controlled by their mental afflictions.

As it says in the text:

Accordingly, Aryadeva's *Four Hundred Stanzas* says:

Just as a doctor does not fight but helps  
Patients who are possessed by spirits, though they  
get angry,  
So the Sage sees that the afflictions are at fault,  
Not the persons who have the afflictions.

Here *the Sage* refers to a buddha, a fully enlightened being, who sees the affliction as the enemy, and never the person. Beings are so overpowered by their mental afflictions that they are helpless. So, they are objects of compassion.

Furthermore,

The master Candrakirti also states:

"This is not living beings' fault,  
Rather it is the fault of the afflictions."  
So the learned analyze  
And do not fight with others.

The text continues,

Although many reasonings are set forth in *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds*, it is easy to be certain of this one, and it is a very powerful remedy for anger. Also, the *Bodhisattva Levels* has the same meaning where it states that you can bear harm after you meditate on the idea of mere phenomena, so meditate repeatedly on this remedy until you reach certain knowledge of it.

As a way to counteract anger towards someone who harms us, we have to realise that the person has harmed us because they didn't have any self-control. As the quotation from Chandrakirti says, they are controlled by mental afflictions, and so have no choice and no control. It is these mental afflictions that are impelling that person to create those harmful actions.

When we understand the situation from this angle, we will see that the true harm doer is the mental affliction, not the person who is acting harmfully. The mental affliction is the driving force, and the person simply succumbs to the force of affliction. When we think of the situation like this, we will feel empathy towards the person who inflicts harm upon us.

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The text continues:

If these beings had self-control, they would not have any suffering, because they would not want suffering and because they could control it.

If you read this carefully, then it is very clear how the person who causes harm is indeed totally enslaved by those mental afflictions and has no choice but to be driven by them. If we think along these lines, then if the person did have *self-control*, *they would not have any suffering, because they would not want suffering and because they could control it*. This also helps us to develop patience towards those who cause harm.

The text continues:

Furthermore, you should stop your anger by also thinking, "When these beings are moved by strong afflictions, they commit suicide, leap from cliffs, harm themselves with thorns, weapons, etc., and stop eating and so forth. [If they do this to even their greatly cherished and dear selves, of course they will hurt others."

This clearly indicates the destructive force of mental afflictions. Normally the self is what we most cherish, yet through the force of mental afflictions people can inflict a lot of harm upon themselves, culminating in self-harm and even suicide. The force of such mental afflictions is so great that people will injure what they hold most dear – themselves. If they do that then what need is there to say that they will cause harm to others. Reflecting on this is a very powerful way of counteracting anger and developing patience.

The text continues,

*Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* states:

Thus, everything is dependent on something else,  
And, because that in turn is dependent, it is not autonomous.  
Understanding this, do not be angry  
At anything, all things being like illusions.

This touches on overcoming anger and developing patience through reflecting on the ultimate reality of things and how all things lack intrinsic existence. Reflecting on things as being like an illusion serves as a remedy to overcome anger.

The text continues,

And also:

Therefore, if you see an enemy or friend  
Doing what is wrong, think  
"This arises from certain conditions,"  
And remain happy.

This relates to what we have already discussed. If, when you receive harm from an enemy or a friend, you reflect on how things happen because of the coming together of various causes and conditions, the harm you receive will not detrimentally affect your attitude. Then you will be able to maintain your inner peace and happiness.

The text continues,

If all beings could achieve results  
According to their wish, then,  
Since no one wants suffering,  
No one would suffer.

And also:

While under the control of their afflictions,  
Some people will kill even their dear selves.  
So how can you expect them  
Not to harm the bodies of others?

All these verses contain very effective advice on how to counteract anger. Therefore, it's very beneficial to repeat these kinds of verses whenever we can, and even memorise them as a way to help us meditate on how to overcome anger and develop patience.

**(b')) On analysis for either adventitiousness or inherency, anger is unjustified**

We will continue with this next week.

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Edited Version*

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