
The Six Perfections

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

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We begin with the usual meditation.

[*Tonglen meditation*]

Ensure you cultivate a bodhicitta motivation – the aspiration to achieve the state of buddhahood to benefit all sentient beings. As we are here to listen to a Dharma teaching, it is important that we begin with a bodhicitta motivation.

The bodhicitta mind is the genuine and pure wish to achieve complete enlightenment to benefit all sentient beings. When we cultivate it, we are leaving a profound impression in our mind to achieve complete enlightenment in order to benefit all sentient beings. Many scriptures state that there is tremendous benefit from generating a bodhicitta mind, even for just an instant. In fact, it is said in the commentary on bodhicitta by Nagarjuna (*Bodhicittavivarana*):

A person who for an instant meditates on the
awakening mind
The heap of merit [obtained from this]
Not even the conquerors can measure.

The benefit of bodhicitta is inconceivable, in that only the omniscient mind of a buddha can apprehend it.

The main cause of a bodhicitta mind is the cultivation of love – the genuine wish for all other sentient beings to possess happiness – and compassion – the wish for all sentient beings to be free of all suffering. Before we can generate bodhicitta, we must develop love and compassion to the point where we don't merely wish others to have happiness and be free from suffering, but also generate the strong sense of universal responsibility, or the superior intention, of taking on the burden of fulfilling the welfare of all beings. So, you not only wish for all beings to be happy but you take on the responsibility of placing them in a state of happiness and freeing them from suffering.

Having generated a superior intention, however, you realise your own limitations, and your inability to fulfil that wish of benefiting others. As you investigate how you can fulfil this thought of benefiting all beings, you realise that you need to achieve complete enlightenment. This is how a bodhicitta mind – the aspiration to achieve complete enlightenment in order to benefit all sentient beings – is generated. In Haribadra's text called *The Commentary Clarifying the Meaning*, the term 'aspirational prayer wishing for the state of enlightenment' is used as another term for bodhicitta.

Having generated a bodhicitta mind, you then need to engage in the six perfections, which are the deeds of bodhisattvas.

In short, with the intention of benefiting all sentient beings as our motivation, we engage in the six perfections as our deeds. We have finished discussing the first two perfections of 'giving' and 'morality' and we are currently discussing the perfection of 'patience'.

Bodhicitta mind is cultivated through the stage-by-stage training and transformation of our mind. Prior to cultivating love and compassion for other beings, we need to have a

strong desire to free ourselves from the suffering of lower rebirth and cyclic existence. So, we need to meditate on the fact that if we took lower rebirth, for example, as an animal, we would go through unbearable suffering. We could, however, prevent being reborn in the lower realms by adhering to the karmic law of cause and effect.

We then need to realise that merely freeing ourselves from lower rebirth is not enough, because as long as we remain in cyclic existence we are subject to the nature of perpetual suffering. Hence, we need to cultivate a sense of renunciation which is the urge or definite thought to leave cyclic existence. After realising that merely liberating ourselves from cyclic existence and leaving behind all our motherly sentient beings is not right, we need to generate love and compassion.

We can see how this stage-by-stage development of our mind culminates in the bodhicitta mind, which serves as our mental intention. Driven by this mind, we then engage ourselves in the six perfections, the bodhisattva deeds, and the result is attaining the twofold body of a buddha.

I won't say I have gained any experiential realisations of the lam-rim, but I can say I have studied the lam-rim in depth over many years. From the ages of 20 to 26, I really devoted myself to studying and practising lam-rim. In those days, the facilities were very poor and I hardly had anything, but I used to work on calming down the desirous mind and trying to be contented with my life.

I also used to focus on the ten innermost jewels of the Kadampa masters. Around that time, I received a commentarial transmission of Kyabje Pabongka Rinpoche's *Three Principal Aspects of the Path*. Then, one day the late Khensur Ogyen advised me to focus on studying the great treatises of ancient Buddhist masters.

We shall now continue with the text.

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

(a) Showing that anger is unjustified

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

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

Last week we stopped at the verse from *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* which reads:

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?

If we think about its meaning, this verse is saying that if we really understood what harmdoers are going through – that they are enraged with anger or hatred or are experiencing other mental afflictions or delusions – it would instil in us a feeling of compassion or empathy towards them. Then we would not generate any thought at all of retaliation, or of getting angry with them.

This verse is advising us that when someone causes us harm, we should try to understand their harmful actions as a manifestation of their mental afflictions (such as anger) and try to understand the suffering they are going through in that situation. Then, instead of retaliating, we will feel empathy and compassion for them, and at least try to adopt a mental outlook that will prevent that situation from disturbing our own wellbeing.

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

The commentary says:

The fault of doing harm to others either is or is not in the nature of living beings. If it is in their nature, it is wrong to get angry, just as it is wrong to get angry at fire for being hot and burning.

As this clearly implies, one way of overcoming the thought of becoming angry with someone who harms us is to examine whether or not it is in their nature to harm us, or whether it is due to some external condition which inflames their anger, causing them to harm us. In either case, we cannot justify showing them anger and retaliating. If it is in their nature to harm us, then it is not right for us to get angry and retaliate.

The analogy used here is fire: the nature of fire is hot, and it has the function of burning. If we touch fire, it will burn our hand; because we know that fire by its nature is hot and can burn things, we don't get angry at the fire that burned us. In the same way, if it were in the nature of other sentient beings to cause harm to others, then just as with fire, it would be wrong for us to get angry at them.

Similarly, if it is adventitious, it is also wrong to be angry, just as when smoke and the like appear in the sky, it is wrong to be angry at the sky on account of these flaws of smoke and so forth.

Likewise, the reason you receive harm from others is not because of their nature, but because of certain adventitious or immediate causes. Again, there is no reason for us to blame others for the harm we receive. It is like getting itchy eyes when the sky is polluted with heavy smoke. We don't blame the sky and become angry with it; rather, we blame the smoky pollution. Similarly, if cloud covers the clear sky, we don't get angry at the sky for the darkness, because we know the cause of the darkness is the cloud. Using the same logic, it is not right or justifiable to be angry with the person who harms us because the harm we receive is conditioned by adventitious causes.

The commentary continues:

Thinking in this way, stop your anger. *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* states:

If doing harm to others
Is natural for the childish,
It is wrong to get angry at them,
Just as it is at fire's burning nature.

Still, if the fault is adventitious,
And the nature of beings is good,
My anger is wrong, just as is
Anger at smoke's appearance in the sky.

(c'') On analysis of whether the harm is direct or indirect, anger is unjustified.

This gives us yet a different perspective to help us overcome anger. Here, the text says:

If you are angry at the agent of harm that directly inflicts the harm, you will have to be angry at the stick, etc., just as you are at the person. If you are angry at the harmdoer who indirectly inflicts harm, then, just as the person impels the stick and so forth to do the harm, so hostility impels the person. Therefore, get angry at the hostility.

This paragraph is raising the question of whether the object of our hatred or anger is a direct, or indirect cause of the harm, or pain we experience. Again, from either perspective, it is wrong for us to direct our anger at the harmdoer.

For example, if someone hits you with a stick, you will experience pain and therefore express anger towards the person. The question here is, why direct your anger at the person? Why not at the stick and the hostile motive of the person, both of which are the contributing causes of your pain?

It is clear that the reason you direct your anger at the person is because you believe that he or she is the cause of your pain. If so, then the direct cause of the pain is obviously the stick, so you should also get angry at the stick. But this shows your angry mind's lack of reasoning. Normally, your anger is not directed at the stick but at the person holding it; you may argue that the stick didn't harm you of its own accord, because it is controlled by and used by the person. Therefore, you get angry at the person, whom you hold responsible for the harm you receive.

The argument here is that, just as the person is an indirect cause of harm, so too is the harmful thought motivating that person. Just as the stick is used by the person, likewise the harmful thought within the continuum of that person uses or propels that person to harm you. When you consider this rationale, then really the main culprit behind the harm you receive is the mental afflictions, such as anger, within the continuum of harmdoers, and not the harmdoers themselves.

If two cars are hit by another from behind in a rear-end accident, the driver of the first car won't blame the driver of the second car, but rather he would blame the driver of the third car who initiated the crash.

Next:

Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds says:

The stick and so forth directly cause the harm.
But if I am angry at the one who throws it,
Then, since hostility impels them,
It is better to get angry at hostility.

If you are not angry at the stick, it is also wrong to be angry at the one who throws it; if you are angry with the one who throws it, then you should be directing the anger at the harmful thought of the person too.

Not believing this, your mind has gone down a wrong path. Therefore, become certain about the overall sameness of the logic here and direct your mind toward not being angry at the person in the same way that you are not angry at the stick.

This emphasises that, for the same reason that you do not get angry with the stick, you can also prevent yourself from getting angry with the person. It then says:

Furthermore, use the reasonings taught earlier that negate the idea that anything has self-control in order to understand that you should not differentiate the stick and the one who throws the stick by whether they have a harmful intent.

So the harmdoer has no choice, but is totally under the power or influence of the anger or hatred in his or her mind; they are fully controlled by it. Therefore, the commentary advises us to *use the reasonings taught earlier that negate the idea that anything has self-control* - that is, reflect on what we covered in last week's teaching, the fact that when you receive harm from another person, try to recognise how the person is lacking self-control in that situation, and in this way try to generate tolerance.

(d'') On analysis of the cause that impels the harmdoers, anger is unjustified.

This section of the commentary advises us to overcome anger by focusing on the actual causes and conditions that impel harmdoers to carry out harmful actions. As it says:

The experience of suffering produced by those who harm does not occur causelessly or from discordant causes, so it occurs from concordant causes; that is to say, from non-virtuous actions you have done in the past.

This relates to the law of cause and effect.

Therefore, harmdoers are helplessly impelled to do harm by the power of your karma.

Here, the text touches on the function of the law of cause and effect, which is to say that everything that happens in our lives is the result of our own karma. This includes situations where, for example, friends seem to dislike us and do things contrary to our wishes. There are many such situations where we don't understand why things occur, or why people act towards us negatively.

We may feel that we don't deserve this and that, or that we have not done anything wrong towards others. But our assessment of the situation is only based on our limited knowledge and memory. In fact, as the text points out here, everything that happens in our lives, including the harm we receive from others, is the fruition or ripening or result of one's own karma.

Consequently, blame yourself, thinking, "This is my fault, and I am wrong to get angry at others," and stop your anger on all occasions.

When you receive harm from others for no reason, you can recognise that adverse situation as having been influenced or instigated by your own past karma. Therefore, you should try to see the cause of that harm as your own negative actions, rather than blaming it on the harmdoer.

Earlier, we came across the term 'concordant' or 'discordant' causes. This term is used to classify the two types of karmic result: the ripening result, and the result concordant with or similar to its cause. An example of the ripening result of a non-virtuous action is taking a rebirth in a lower realm, such as an animal. However, the concordant result or result similar to the cause of that same non-virtuous action could also ripen in a good rebirth. For example, the suffering we experience as a human would be the result concordant with its cause of a non-virtuous action.

The commentary continues:

For example, it is similar to the way that beings produce the guardians of hell with their own bad karma, and these guardians then inflict harm on them.

Here, the text is saying that when beings take birth in the hell realms, they encounter the guardians of the hell realms, which inflict suffering on them. But those guardians do not come into existence independently of themselves – rather, they are the result or manifestation of beings' own past negative karmas.

Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds states:

I, at a former time, inflicted
Harm such as this on living beings.
Therefore, it is fitting that I, who hurt others,
Should receive this harm.

So it's important to acknowledge that the harm and suffering you receive is the ripening or exhaustion of your own negative karma. Since experiencing harm and suffering or facing difficulties indicates the exhaustion of our past negative karma, it is saying here that we should accept it

joyfully and rejoice. The situation should also be regarded as a lesson and inspire us to think: 'I should not create any more negative karma but should create only positive karma'.

We need to be very clear in our mind that if we harm others we will receive harm from them. Sometimes, we will notice that others immediately retaliate when we harm them. From this experience, we can learn that all the harm we receive from others and the suffering we experience in our life is the result or fruition of our own past karma.

The text continues:

And also:

The childish do not want suffering,
Yet crave the causes of suffering.
So why should I be angry with others
When it is my own fault that I am hurt?

In relation to this, one master said: 'I am happy when I receive suffering, but I am not happy when I receive happiness.' This master's outlook is based on the fact that finding suffering and misery in our lives is an indication of the exhaustion of our past negative karma, so from this angle it is good news. Whereas finding joy and happiness is an indication that our positive karma is being exhausted; this is bad news, as we don't want to use it up.

The commentary continues:

For example, just like the guardians of hell
And the Sword-leafed Forest,
I produce this harm with my own actions.
So at whom should I get angry?
Those who do me harm arise
Impelled by my own karma.
If thereby they go to a hell,
Have I not ruined them?

Also, Sha-bo-ba said, "When you say, 'I am not at fault,' it indicates that you, in fact, have not internalized even a bit of the teaching."

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

If you get angry at a harmdoer through an inability to bear suffering, it is contradictory because, even as you are failing to bear slight suffering in the present, you are aggressively creating the cause of measureless suffering in the miserable realms.

As it says here *if you get angry at a harmdoer through an inability to bear suffering, it is contradictory*. Normally, we lose our temper and get angry because we don't want even the slightest suffering or cannot tolerate the slightest loss or harm from others.

If that's the case, then it is saying here that it is contradictory to let anger control our mind, because anger will bring a far greater amount of suffering and loss upon us. If you really do not want to experience suffering, then instead of getting angry, you should practise patience.

When the text says *because, even as you are failing to bear slight suffering in the present, you are aggressively creating the cause of measureless suffering in the miserable realms*, the implication is that if we do not practise patience, we will lose our mind to anger. When our mind fills with anger, it is almost as if we are deliberately creating the cause of suffering, which – compared to what we are currently experiencing from the harm we receive from others – may be measureless suffering in miserable realms.

The text continues:

Therefore, induce a sense of embarrassment, thinking, "I am very stupid," and work to contain your anger.

We need to truly recognise that when we get angry, we are in fact creating a cause for greater suffering in the future – all because of our inability to tolerate a slight experience of suffering now. So when we observe our situation holistically, we can see how narrow-minded, foolish and stupid our judgement is when we receive harm. In fact, we have reason to feel ashamed of ourselves.

Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds states:

If I cannot endure
Even the slight suffering of the present,
Then why do I not stop my anger,
The cause of suffering in the hells?

The suffering generated by harm is the effect of previous bad karma; by experiencing it, you exhaust this karma. If you bear the suffering, you do not accumulate new sins and you greatly increase your merit. Therefore, you must not consider how harmdoers ruin their virtue, but view them as kind in that it is as though they are engaged in actions for the sake of clearing away your sins.

The main point here is to see the harmdoer as someone doing you a great favour. As it says here, *therefore you must not consider how harmdoers ruin their virtue* – that is, the harmdoer is ruining their own practice of virtue, yet is doing you a favour. So if you can bear the suffering, you will not accumulate new sins, and you will greatly increase your merit, and so on.

Next:

The *Garland of Birth Stories* says:

We note here how Tsongkhapa first gives the explanation, then cites the source of the explanation.

I do not think about this person ruining his virtue,
But that he is as if engaged in actions to clear away my
sins;
If I am not patient even with this person,
How could I be any more unkind?

It clearly implies here that we should cultivate a sense of gratitude towards harmdoers or enemies. His Holiness the Dalai Lama frequently emphasises that we develop the practice of patience thanks to our enemies or those who harm us. Indeed, it is not our spiritual gurus who provide us with practical lessons on developing patience, but it is our enemies or harmdoers whom we depend on to develop patience. So, thinking in this way, you can develop patience.

And Candrakirti's Commentary on the "Middle Way" says:

You want to say that you are exhausting
The effects of non-virtuous karma done in the past;
How then can you sow the seeds of further suffering
By getting angry and harming others?

This is aligned with what we discussed earlier. In a sense, the harm we receive from others benefits or helps us exhaust the result of our negative or sinful actions and is thus favourable for us. Therefore, we should not be angry with others in return. If we are angry with them, then we will aggravate their situation: as it says, *we sow the seeds of further suffering by getting angry and harming them*. So, as well as having harmed us out of their hatred for us, the harmdoers will also plant the seed of further suffering for themselves. Thus, this verse is saying that the person who receives the real harm is not us, but rather the harmdoer.

We can also understand here how, just as it is detrimental for everyone else to show anger towards others, we should

likewise not get angry at others. By doing that, we are creating the cause for our own future suffering. Therefore, there is no benefit, and nothing to win, when we generate anger within ourselves, or if we cause anger to arise in others.

On Sunday 16 June, we have the Saga Dawa puja. Geshe-la would like to sponsor lunch, but he will have to rely on volunteers to organise it. Then on 6 July is His Holiness' birthday. To celebrate this, Geshe-la suggests that maybe you students will host a lunch.

Saga is the Tibetan name for a particular very bright star that appears once in the fourth month of each year of the Tibetan lunar calendar. *Dawa* means month in Tibetan. So, that month is called 'Saga Dawa', which is observed as a very auspicious month, associated with the Buddha's birthday, which falls on the eighth, and the Buddha's enlightenment and paranirvana, observed on the fifteenth of the month.

In Tibet, many people take the Mahayana precepts and observe vegetarianism during Saga Dawa. In that month, you can only buy dry meat in markets but not fresh meat. The Saga Dawa month is very auspicious for engaging in virtue as it will be multiplied many times at this time.

At the Centre, we are holding a Nyung Nye this weekend. It is a wonderful practice of purification and accumulating merit. People who have done the Nyung Nye say that they find it hard in the beginning and during the practice, but at the end of the practice, they really feel very positive. As a benefit of the practice, they have found themselves mentally and physically much healthier, fresher and clearer. These are some signs of the purification of negativities and accumulation of merit. Years back, while I did a two-week retreat in Sorrento, Angelica did the Nyung Nye practice and she said she found it extremely beneficial.

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