

Study Group - "Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand"

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅད་སྤྱོད་



13 April 1999

Try to cultivate the motivation of bodhicitta, which is the altruistic mind of seeking complete enlightenment to benefit all beings. Then think "I am receiving this teaching to fulfil this ultimate spiritual goal and in order to achieve this goal I shall put this teaching into practice".

In the root text we are up to the line that says,

Always practise with pure impartiality on all objects.

Here, "all objects", includes all animate and inanimate objects.

The next line says,

Cherish the in-depth and broad application of all skills.

Together these two lines state that our Thought Transformation practice has to come from the depths of our heart, and without any discrimination between friends, enemies or strangers. We should also adopt a very broad understanding of this practice.

Always meditate on those closely related.

This line means that we should take special precautions in our Thought Transformation practice at those times when we face people who are our competitors, or who are causing harm to us without any reason. We must be cautious at these times because this is when it is so easy to forget our practice. This line of the text emphasises the importance of maintaining our Thought Transformation practice at all times, and under all circumstances.

The lam rim teaching says that we should first train ourselves to cultivate and develop true love and compassion to those sentient beings who are closest to us - our friends, parents and so on. Extending this love, compassion and patience to those who are our competitors is however, very hard. So this Thought Transformation practice says that we need to make a special effort to show patience, love and compassion towards our competitors, and make an even greater effort to show love and compassion towards our enemies.

It is important to understand that it is possible to extend our love, compassion and patience beyond our close circle of friends and family. It is a great honour to know anyone who loves their enemies. We wonder how they can accept harm and loss from their enemies, and yet show such incredible patience with them. To be able to do this is just a matter of perfecting our practice of showing love and compassion to other beings.

If we consider the qualities of the love, compassion and

patience which we [usually] practice, we see that generally its scope is very limited. We only practise these towards those who are close to us. When we examine our feeling of love or compassion or sympathy we find the reason why we have such a feeling is because the objects of our love are special to us, and we have a sense of gratitude toward them. It is love and compassion but it is not perfect in the sense that it is not caused or generated by a true objective understanding of their situation. Because they are special to us, we wish them more happiness, more joy and to be free of any problems because subjectively we feel there is reason to do so. However the line in the text says that if we cultivate our love and compassion completely on the base of our understanding of the objective situation, then it makes no difference whether that person is friend or enemy, or whether they have helped us or harmed us.

As many lam rim teachings instruct, it is important to try as much as possible to cultivate and develop this true quality love and compassion towards those with whom we have close interactions in life, and with whom we have some form of relationship. As said before, it is much easier to make real progress in our practice of love and compassion by directing our practice towards those close to us.

We should also try to understand that unless we see the benefits we shall not have a strong motivation to practise, so it is important to focus on the benefits of the practice by seeing how a lot of the problems we face are all the result of not practising love, compassion and patience especially towards those close to us. We have to make a special effort to practise this with our competitors, and we must not to think of competitors as always being outside of our own circle. When it seems like our friends are being competitive, we feel jealous of them, and so lose our patience and tolerance. We can also remember the times when our friends caused problems for us and how, if we are not aware of the benefits of keeping a calm mind, we show anger instead of patience, and jealousy instead of showing love.

What is the effect of this jealousy and hatred on us. Is there anything beneficial? Irrespective of the effect on other people, is there any benefit to ourselves? There is no benefit, and indeed due to jealousy and hatred our mind becomes very distracted and we lose all our peace and happiness. Of course if we think of our relationships, there are no benefits of hatred and jealousy because they come from the motivation to harm other beings, which in turn causes further problems in our

relationships with others.

Rather than losing our temper and causing harm to others, if we try to control our mind and actions, and try to have more understanding of the objective side of the situation then we shall see the benefits of practising patience, love, compassion and sympathy for others. If we do this and maintain our practice then situations do not disturb our mind and our inner peace and happiness. Even in bad circumstances if we can show love, compassion and sympathy to others, then the other being can understand and appreciate that practice since they are human beings too. So we can see how when we practise in this way it benefits others, and creates harmony in our relationships with others.

It is simply a matter of taking our time, and being consistent with our practice. Then it is possible that one day we shall be able to show compassion and patience towards someone to whom we could not show such a mental attitude in the past.

The next line says,

Depend not upon other circumstances.

This line indicates that our practice should not be conditional upon our living conditions. It is wrong to procrastinate, thinking that we can practise when we find the right conditions. In fact we cannot wait for a better time: there is no better time to practise than now. For spiritual practice we cannot find better conditions than those which we have right now. This line of the text is saying that for spiritual practice we should not take into account our mental and physical health, or our material position. It is wrong to think that we can only practise when we enjoy good physical and mental health, or good material conditions, and to not practise when conditions are unfavourable.

It is very easy for ordinary people to relax when things are going well and they possess wealth, feeling that all their needs in life are being fulfilled. What is wrong with this attitude? Such people will become very discouraged and unhappy if suddenly their position changes. They do not have enough courage or determination to cope. We have to understand how, if our mental and physical health is not good enough now, then there will never be a time when it will be good enough. There is no time when we can say our physical and mental health is perfect. We can always find some excuse not to practise. It is the same with material wealth: even the incredibly rich will always be able to find something, which they do not yet possess.

We can't postpone practising in the hope that we shall find the right mental and physical conditions, because these probably do not exist, or if they do exist they are very rare. This encourages us to put this teaching into practice regardless of any reason or excuse.

The implication of this line is the importance of transforming the unfavourable conditions or obstacles into favourable ones.

The next line of the root text is,

Exert yourself especially at this time.

This implies that the time we have found now is the best time. Why it is the best time or opportunity to practise

Dharma? This precious human rebirth that we have now has all the freedoms and endowments, and all the suitable conditions to practise Dharma. At this time it is important to practise Dharma in the sense of placing more importance on the needs of future lives, rather than the needs of this life. In other words spiritual practice is more important than worldly endeavours. For spiritual practice there are two vehicles, and of these the Greater Vehicle practice of Thought Transformation is more important. Between practice and learning, practising is the more important, and the most important practice is cultivating the bodhicitta mind.

Do not follow inverted deeds.

There are six types of "inverted deeds".

1. Wrong Practice of Patience and Tolerance

We have tolerance in protecting the interests of our friends and challenging enemies, but not towards the hardships of practising Dharma. We should have tolerance and patience in our spiritual practice.

2. Wrong Aspiration

We aspire to acquiring material goods, but not towards the practice of achieving spiritual development.

3. Wrong Experience

We have indulged in worldly pleasure, but not in experiencing the joy of engaging in hearing, contemplating and meditating on Dharma.

4. Wrong Compassion

We feel compassion for an ascetic who engages in spiritual practice, but not for someone who engages in negative or evil actions.

5. Wrong Friend

This is holding those who can help us to acquire wealth, and so on, as very reliable friends, but not regarding those who can guide us in the spiritual path as very reliable friends.

6. Wrong Rejoicing

This is rejoicing in the negative actions of ourself and others rather than rejoicing in the positive actions of ourself and others. Wrong rejoicing also includes rejoicing in the suffering of enemies.

These are the six orders of wrong attitudes.

Headings with outline numbering are derived from the Text. Headings without outline numbering are derived from Geshe Doga's commentary.

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20 April 1999

Try to cultivate the bodhicitta motivation for listening to these teachings by thinking that you are receiving these lam rim teachings in order to achieve full enlightenment, or the state of Buddhahood, to benefit all beings. As well as this, also think that for this reason not only will you listen and learn, but you will also sincerely put this into practice to train and calm your mind.

In the last teaching we finished by listing the six types of wrong orders [or inverted actions]. Following on from the line referring to these inverted deeds, the next line of the root text says:

Do not be erratic.

So rather than practising sometimes and not at others, try to be consistent and undertake to practise continuously.

If, instead of taking our time and making a gradual effort on a consistent basis, we become overzealous, trying to progress rapidly to achieve a quick result, then the final result will not be very fruitful. This line advises us that we should try to practise at our own pace, and not hurry with our practice.

We must realise that we live a very busy life with many unavoidable [commitments and responsibilities]. It creates difficulties if, when we generate some interest in spiritual practice, we become overzealous and put aside everything else for our spiritual practice. Such a rushed and sudden decision is called 'hairy renunciation'. With this instantly generated motivation we might practise like this for a month or a year, then suddenly we may become so tired and frustrated that it is easy to give up our spiritual practice.

As the famous master Gonpa Rinchen says, we should look into the very long distance with a very courageous mind, with a very relaxed and restful feeling. Relating this to our practice, our aim is to achieve the state of the omniscient mind of a buddha. The courage and determination, which we should possess, should be the courage of the spiritual practitioner who follows the greater vehicle or Mahayana, and in our practice we should always be at ease and relaxed.

Instead of thinking that our practice is for our whole life, on a day-by-day basis, we may have the mind that wants to see quick results. We may think of putting aside a period, of say three years, to devote to our practice, but this only creates pressure, causing stress and anxiety. Then, let alone making stable spiritual progress, even in mundane life it is hard to make progress in activities such as work and study.

For long term spiritual progress we should see that there is more benefit in applying our spiritual practice on a regular daily basis, even if only for half an hour a day. In the long term we make more progress and our practice is more

effective and beneficial, than if we make a lot of effort over a short period, even say a three year retreat. If you break down a three year retreat into the days and hours in which you actually practise, it is not much in comparison to a whole lifetime of practising for only thirty minutes a day. Over a whole lifetime there is more, and better quality practice in that half an hour each day. So there is more benefit for you with that approach.

Therefore we have to practise at the right pace - neither too relaxed and too much at ease, nor too hard and forceful. Practice can include all the practices we do, beginning with waking - the Yoga of Arising - and onwards. We should try to integrate all these practices not in a rush but step by step, one by one making gradual progress. If we are unused to it, we cannot put into practice all the spiritual teachings and types of practice when we first start. It is said that we should try to practise whatever we can, and what we can do we should do regularly and consistently, not taking it seriously on one day then forgetting it the next. Then as you progress you will find more time, so that you can add more practices and gradually make progress.

In making progress the difference between someone who does it with ease and someone who does it in a rush is like a race between a louse and a flea. Which would win such a race? The louse wins, because although the flea makes big jumps, it must rest after each jump because it no longer has any energy. Whereas the louse moves more slowly and does not need to rest, so it gets to the goal before the flea.

We can also understand how in school courses some students might be sharp-minded and quick at learning. There are some who are slow learners but who continue their course without a break, whereas the sharp-minded ones take a break of a year and so finish later. The result is that the slow learners finish their course earlier, are more qualified and may already have a job, whereas the sharp minded ones have not finished and still have to look for a job!

Also the reason why we have to make a continuous effort in getting oneself used to spiritual practice and this practice of mind-training, is that familiarity with a practice makes it much easier to perform it. Spiritual practice not only brings great benefit during our life, but also gives great benefit at the time of death. At death, nothing else but spiritual practice has the potential to benefit us, in the sense of helping us to die peacefully with a positive state of mind. It also helps to overcome fear - the fear of suffering at that time, and the fear of not knowing about the after life. Spiritual practice also benefits us in future lives, since it is said that dying in a very calm and peaceful state of mind is a good cause for us to find a better future rebirth.

We really have to become very familiar with spiritual

practice, which not only brings peace and happiness to our minds, but which also brings control over our mind, so that it is not influenced by any kinds of mental delusion such as anger, attachment, jealousy and so on. We must not just learn about the shortcomings of delusions, but we have to put it into practice from this moment on, to help us to gain more control of our mind.

Our aim is to be able to do this practice whenever we want, so that even at the time of death we are able to control our mind, not allowing any delusion to be present or to influence our mind at that time. If our mind is not influenced by the delusions then it is guaranteed that at the time of death our mind will be peaceful. It is important to realise that 'practice' is more than just bringing immediate short term pleasure or peace to the mind. If this were the only goal, then it can be achieved by other worldly things which can also bring us pleasure. However we have to realise that these worldly things are not reliable because although they are a cause of happiness now, they can be a cause of suffering later. So it is important to understand the deeper meaning or purpose of spiritual practice, and to achieve that purpose in our practice.

The next line [of the root text] is,

Do not underestimate your ability.

In the commentary this line implies we should be placing our whole mind on this practice of Thought Transformation - completely entrusting ourselves to, and relying upon this practice. We should not see it as something to be just outwardly studied or observed - it must be integrated into our mind, so that there is no gap between these Thought Transformation teachings, and our continuum. If we do not wholeheartedly put these teachings into our practice then, it says, no matter how long we follow them, these teachings will have no benefit for our inner continuum.

Be liberated by two: examination and analysis.

This line means that firstly we should observe which one of all the types of mental delusions within us is the strongest. Having recognised that, we should first engage in specific meditations which counteract that specific delusion. Then afterwards we should always examine and check whether through this meditation practice we have overcome that delusion. Is it still strong? Is it still arising within us? If so then we have to continue to counteract that delusion by continuing to engage in meditation.

Do not be boastful.

This is also in relation to what one does for others. The line is saying that, for instance when you help other people, you do so through your own wish and motivation as part of the spiritual commitment you make to benefit all living beings. So the meaning of this line is to not be boastful in the sense of reminding others at every opportunity of the help and benefit you have given them. After a while this boastful behaviour makes them feel bad about having received help from you.

Do not retaliate.

This [line from the root text] refers to not retaliating to others who cause you harm, for example someone who embarrasses you in front of people whom you know. It is saying that we have to understand that our main spiritual practice is to overcome the self-cherishing, self-centred mind. Whenever anyone abuses us we should not get into a temper; rather we should control our anger, and in this way not retaliate.

Do not be fickle.

We should not be someone who is easily pleased and upset over even tiny and minor causes. In the commentary text, it says we should not be like the spring weather. Here spring is not so bad, but in Tibet it brings very bad weather. Geshe-la says that it is probably more relevant to think of Melbourne's changeable weather!

The last instruction is,

Do not wish for gratitude.

We should not have any hope of receiving any rewards from our spiritual practice, or from any help we give to others. Having a sense of receiving rewards comes from the influence of the self-cherishing mind, which is a fault in one's Mahayana practice.

So if we do others a favour we should try not to expect anything in return, as it is part of our Thought Transformation practice. If you are teaching Dharma your motivation should not include any thought of receiving praise or admiration. It is also wrong to give something to others in order to get a reward. Of course you should be polite and show your appreciation by saying "Thank you" to others for the things that they have given you, or for their help. You should not however, do so in the hope of receiving more from them in the future.

Hoping for such rewards shows the weaknesses we may have in our Mahayana practice, and shows that all our actions are under the influence of the deep-seated self-cherishing mind.

We leave the teaching here and recite the Heart Sutra, mainly for the purpose of purifying negativities.

We shall begin by saying the Refuge Prayer three times. Before we go for refuge you visualise an infinite number of buddhas, bodhisattvas and so on in front of you. As we recite this refuge prayer we take refuge in the infinite number of enlightened beings, and at the same time generate the bodhicitta mind inside us

When we talk of purifying all our negativities in terms of the forces of purification, then this refuge prayer is the application of the **force of the object or base**. Having taken refuge, quickly think of all the karmic negativities we might have accumulated from beginningless time. Knowing that the effect of these negativities is absolutely undesirable, feel remorse and regret for having created these, which is **the force of regret**. Then, promise yourself not to repeat these negative actions again, which is **the force of resolution**. Finally we recite the Heart Sutra which is **the force of remedy, or antidote**. As we recite the Heart Sutra, if you are familiar with its meaning of emptiness and ultimate truth, think of how all phenomena lack true or inherent existence.

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27 April 1999

As a motivation first try to cultivate the genuine thought of seeking complete enlightenment to benefit all sentient beings, which is bodhicitta. Then think of putting into practice these profound Thought Transformation teachings which we are studying, since they are a cause to fulfil the ultimate goal of full enlightenment for the sake of all beings.

Of the main topics, which we have covered so far, we have finished the teaching on the Two Ways Of Training In Bodhicitta [heading 422.321] which are:

1. Seven-Fold Cause and Effect
2. Exchanging Self and Others

The teaching which follows this is How To Generate Bodhicitta By Relying On A Ritual Formula [heading 422.322]. This is the order in which the teaching is introduced in the lam rim. If we relate this teaching to our progress in our practice, then at the end of learning about the two methods of generating bodhicitta mind, we are supposed to have some experience of an artificial, fabricated bodhicitta. In order to transform this fabricated bodhicitta into a genuine bodhicitta, and to make our mind more acquainted with bodhicitta we [need to] rely upon some kind of ritual formula to generate this bodhicitta mind. However in terms of the order of teaching, this topic comes after the explanation of the deeds of a bodhisattva.

We shall note here that before the bestowing of bodhisattva vows we were taught about those vows, and the deeds related to those vows. This is contrary to the normal order, where the vows are explained after they have been conferred. This is the same as vows of personal liberation, which are explained after you have received them.

The Precious Benefits Of Bodhicitta

Here we should try to focus on the preciousness of the bodhicitta mind not just with our lips, but from the depths of our heart. We may have some understanding of the bodhicitta mind, but no matter what our level of understanding, it is important to experience just how precious and beneficial this mind of bodhicitta is, from the depths of our hearts.

It is the source of all excellent spiritual qualities of the Mahayana, or Great Vehicle; it is the most effective means of overcoming our deluded states of mind; and it is also the most effective means for reaching the state of buddhahood. Its importance is such that without cultivating bodhicitta in our mind, then no matter what practice in which we engage, whether the highest yoga Tantra practice of generation or completion stage, we shall not make any progress in our journey to the state of buddhahood.

We have to try to understand that even if we have not generated a fully-fledged bodhicitta mind, generating a genuine appreciation of bodhicitta can leave an imprint on our mind, so that the genuine bodhicitta can manifest in our minds in the future.

As a means to quickly achieve the state of buddhahood, or the means to quickly calm our mind, bodhicitta is the most effective and complete method. If we do not see that bodhicitta

is the answer to our problems, or to our quest for spiritual goals, then there is no hope for us. Try to understand that let alone being able to fully understand it, or even to cultivate bodhicitta, to have the opportunity to study it, or even hear the word 'bodhicitta' is so fortunate. We have to see its potential as the perfect means to calm our mind and to achieve the complete state of enlightenment.

422.33 Engaging In The Deeds Of Bodhisattvas

Although this bodhicitta mind is so precious and vital to our spiritual practice, just having cultivated bodhicitta is not enough. We must also engage in deeds of a bodhisattva. What follows explains the bodhisattva's deeds in two parts:

- a) The Six Perfections which are mainly to ripen one's own continuum.
- b) The Four Means of Gathering Disciples which are mainly to ripen the continuum of other beings.

422.331 Training In The Six Perfections In Order To Ripen Your Own Continuum¹

Firstly we list the Six Perfections and their six opposites.

1. The Perfection of **Generosity** with its opposite of **Miserliness**
2. The Perfection of **Morality** with its opposite of **Immorality**
3. The Perfection of **Patience** with its opposite of **Anger**
4. The Perfection of **Joyous Effort** with its opposite of **Laziness**
5. The Perfection of **Concentration** with its opposite of **Distraction**
6. The Perfection of **Wisdom** with its opposite of **Ignorance**

It is said that these Six Perfections include all of the deeds of the bodhisattvas, and this can be understood in two ways.

In relation to the ultimate goal of the bodhisattva on the path which is the state of a buddha's two bodies: the Form body and Truth body.

1. It is said that the two main tools to achieve these two bodies of a buddha are skilful means and wisdom. Skilful means is the main cause to achieve a buddha's *form* body and wisdom is the main cause to achieve a buddha's *truth* body.
2. Another way to explain the causes of a buddha's two bodies is in terms of the two accumulations - the accumulation of merit and the accumulation of wisdom.

We can categorise the Six Perfections for each of these two explanations.

1. For skilful means and wisdom:
 - the First to the Fifth Perfections are regarded as the skilful means
 - the Sixth Perfection is regarded as wisdom.

¹ Editor: this has three sub-headings:

422.331.1 The General Way to train in the deeds of the children of the victors

422.331.2 In particular, the way to train in the last two Perfections

422.331.3 How to train in the uncommon part of the teaching, the Vajrayana

2. For the two types of accumulations:

- the First to the Third Perfections are the accumulation of merit
- the Fifth and Sixth Perfections are the accumulation of wisdom
- the Fourth Perfection of Joyous Effort is common to both accumulations of merit and wisdom.

We do not have the time to go into much detail about each of these Six Perfections, but we shall try to cover some of it based on the explanation in Lama Tsong Khapa's *Lam Rim Chen Mo* or *Great Exposition on the Great Stages of the Path*.

Why There Are Only Six Perfections?

One aspect of knowing about the Six Perfections is knowing why are there just six bodhisattva's deeds? The following reasons are given.

First Reason: In Terms Of High Status Of Rebirth

The first reason is in terms of the high status of rebirth, which relates to all the necessary conditions and resources which we require in order to complete the bodhisattva's deeds, or even just to engage in them.

Completing the bodhisattva's deeds takes not just one life cycle but aeons of life cycles. Therefore, in order to find an opportunity and the right conditions to complete the bodhisattva's deeds, it is important to create all the necessary conditions and the resources for a long period of time.

We need [sufficient] material possessions, because without them we cannot engage in the bodhisattva's deeds. The practice of Generosity is the cause to gain these material conditions and wealth.

In addition we must also accumulate the excellent life in which to enjoy these excellent resources. The cause for obtaining that excellent life or body, is the practice of Morality.

Our practice also depends upon having good companions and friends, which comes through the Perfection of Patience.

The Perfection of Joyous Effort is cause to be able to complete the result of whatever action we undertake, and to see the result of that action. So the first four Perfections result in bringing about the four excellences of wealth, body, friends, and the completion of actions.

In addition to these four excellent conditions, bodhisattvas are not influenced by any mental delusion associated with those conditions. The Perfection of Concentration is the reason why these excellent conditions do not cause more delusions for bodhisattvas. Because of the Perfection of Wisdom bodhisattvas are not confused or misled in their deeds: the Perfection of Wisdom provides a clear guide as to what to adopt and what to abandon.

With this intelligent wisdom, your merit is never exhausted. Someone without wisdom will not create more merit. Rather they will only consume the fruits of the merit that they accumulated in the past, and when that has all been consumed, they fall into suffering. For a bodhisattva there is no such fate.

Second Reason: In Terms Of Accomplishing The Two Purposes

The six Perfections can be categorised in terms of two purposes - the purpose for oneself, and the purpose for others.

The first three Perfections fulfil a purpose for other beings. Generosity is giving material aid to the poor, and Dharma to those in need of Dharma. Through this Perfection of Generosity we extend help to other beings. Not only do you help others by engaging in generosity, but you also refrain from harming other beings through the Perfection of Morality, which is refraining from harmfulness. The Perfection of Patience is practised to endure, and not retaliate to any harm

you receive from other beings. These first three Perfections accomplish the bodhisattva's purpose for other beings.

The next three Perfections fulfil a bodhisattva's purpose for themselves. They fulfil the bodhisattva's state of happiness, which is the main cause for liberation. The main cause for liberation is the Perfection of Wisdom, but without the Perfection of Concentration the mind would be agitated and distracted. With such a mind it is impossible to achieve the state of liberation, so the bodhisattva engages in the Perfection of Concentration, and because of the Perfection of Concentration their mind becomes stable and immovable, [when placed] on an object.

If you fall into laziness then you cannot achieve the state of liberation, and this laziness is overcome by the bodhisattva's deeds of joyous effort. Therefore in terms of fulfilling the two purposes of the bodhisattva all the means are included in the six Perfections.

Further Teaching On Truth And Form Bodies

Is the Truth body a body? Normally 'body' is something solid. Can the mind be a 'body'? Yes, in the sense that it is a collection. The Tibetan equivalent for the word 'body' is *lu* which literally translates as 'a group of matter accumulated together'. So a body is many parts grouped together. The body is *lu* but we do not say the individual parts of the body such as the hand, or the eye are 'the body'.

It depends upon the connotation you attach to the term 'Truth body'. When you hear it for the first time would you think of it as something physical? Probably yes. A lot of translations of terms can give the wrong connotation so instead of English we can use the Sanskrit word *kaya* which is translated as body. Geshe-la thinks that this is a case where it is good to use Sanskrit, like the terms 'dharma' and 'samsara' which are widely known words that have become part of everyday language. Perhaps it is better if we use the Sanskrit term for body.

The term Dharmakaya means the Truth Body or buddha mind in the sense that it is the ultimate or true way of being, rather than this gross physical body.

Dharmakaya or Truth Body is divided into:

- **Wisdom Truth Body** which generally refers to a buddha's omniscient mind.
- **Nature Truth Body** which is the buddha's state of cessation, or abandonment of all obscurations.

The **Form Body** or **Rupakaya** is that which appears to the mind of ordinary beings, and to which we can visually relate. It is what we most often refer to as the Buddha. There are two types of form body:

- The **Fully Endowed Body** or **Sambhogakaya** is the type of form body of a buddha which has five definitive characteristics. It is the first body in which a buddha achieves the state of buddhahood.
- The **Emanation Body** or **Nirmanakaya** which has various types:
 - o **Supreme Emanation Body**, which is the historical Lord Shakyamuni Buddha.
 - o **Birth Emanation Body**, which is the type of buddha's body which can manifest in various aspects.

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4 May 1999

You have just meditated on bodhicitta, so now cultivate the same bodhicitta as your motivation for listening to and practising the teachings. If you do so, this can be a cause to further develop the bodhicitta mind.

As mentioned in the last teaching, having cultivated a bodhicitta mind one then engages in the deeds of a bodhisattva. There are two types of bodhisattva deeds: the Six Perfections to ripen one's own continuum, and the bodhisattva's deeds to attract disciples, or the Four Means of Gathering Disciples.

422.331.1 The General Teaching On The Six Perfections

We now start the general teaching on the Six Perfections.

At the moment we may not be practising any of the six Deeds of Perfection, however we should be trying to practise substitute forms of those Deeds. It is said that even substitute versions of the bodhisattva's Deeds of Perfection will accumulate enormous merit.

In discussing this topic of the Six Perfections we have to understand the two meanings of Perfection in terms of:

- The time when the causes are created
- The time when the results are created

422.331.11 The Perfection Of Giving

Definition

In **causal** terms the Perfection of Giving is the practice of generosity which includes these three elements.

1. the bodhicitta mind
2. the proper dedication
3. the wisdom realising emptiness.

These three qualities are necessary to qualify a practice of giving as a practice of the Perfection of Giving. They mean that the practice of the Perfection of Giving is not so much about the actual act of giving an object, as about the mind or thought of giving. So therefore the practice of giving means to cultivate and develop this thought of giving.

From the point of view of **result**, the practice of the Perfection of Giving only exists as a quality of a buddha. This literally means that we complete the Perfection of Giving only when we achieve enlightenment.

Obstacles

As mentioned previously, it is important to identify 'giving' as the thought of giving, and to cultivate that thought. By practising giving we are overcoming the mind of miserliness which makes us hold very tightly to our possessions. We can hold them so tightly that we do

not want to use them for ourselves, let alone giving them so that others may benefit.

Our own life experience shows us what miserliness does to us. The fears and worry it generates bring no happiness and satisfaction to our life, and we can see how different our experience of our possessions would be if we were not miserly.

Geshe-la says he does not possess any wealth. Certainly in his younger years, when he left his home country, he led the life of a beggar. When he looks back he remembers that he always found peace and joy in his mind. With freedom from miserliness, even a true beggar who owns nothing can live life in peace and happiness.

It is important to understand that as we discuss the practice of giving, we must not only focus on what it means, but we must know what hindrances we shall overcome by doing this practice. In this case the hindrance is miserliness which we must overcome because it is a cause of suffering which prevents us taking advantage of our possessions.

In brief we need to know:

- the definition of giving, which is the thought of giving
- the obstacle to our practice, which is miserliness.

Lastly we need to know how to practise giving.

The Practice Of Giving

To make our practice of giving the Perfection of Giving we must include the following causal elements.

The motivation for giving is to achieve buddhahood for the benefit all other beings. Our motivation for giving, therefore, should be bodhicitta: giving for sake of other beings rather for our own benefit.

The next factor is the **awareness of the nature of ultimate reality** in relation to:

- the recipient of our practice of giving
- the person who is performing the practice, ie you
- the substance which you give to others

The ultimate reality of these three is that they are all empty and lack inherent existence. If you have studied this view of emptiness, then here you try to think of the emptiness of these three.

At the end of the practice, the third factor is to **dedicate** to the cause of the practice, which is for it to be a cause to achieve buddhahood for the sake of all beings. Then whatever merit you have accumulated through this practice of giving will not be lost, but will become a

secure cause to achieve buddhahood.

As part of this practice of giving it is also important to recognise the faults and shortcomings of miserliness. Think of the problems it brings in life. Think of the many arguments people in relationships have about their wealth and possessions. It is all caused by their miserliness. When two people break up after having been in a relationship for a long time, some have so many problems when they divide up their wealth. This is all caused by miserliness in their minds. On the other hand others in the same situation have no problem in dividing up their wealth, as neither party is attached to their wealth, and so they ensure that each gets their fair share. In this practice of giving what we are trying to do is to develop the thought of giving to others, and the real obstacle is the mind of miserliness. It is important to overcome this miserly mind, and to do that we need to understand the faults of miserliness.

The Three Types Of Giving¹

[There are three types of giving.] In some texts the giving of Dharma is taught first, but here we begin with giving of material objects.

422.331.111 Giving Of Material Objects

The giving of our own body and material possessions are instances of giving material objects. The highest level of giving material objects is giving our own life, while the lowest level is to give eg a bowl of food.

Giving has to entail more than just giving material objects: it has to come from the genuine thought of giving. The initial emphasis of our practice should therefore be on trying to increase this thought of giving, and on allowing this thought to arise without any hindrances such as miserliness or attachment. We should try to reduce these hindrances by understanding the disadvantages of attachment to our body and other external material possessions, and to cultivate this thought of giving.

We should also contemplate the benefits of having the mind of giving. One benefit is that by becoming very familiar with giving now, we shall lose our attachment to our body, life and possessions. Then at the time of our death we shall experience less fear and mental suffering. Why should we bother about what we shall undergo at the time of death? Death is something which we all have to undergo. If we think about it now we can do some preparation, like this practice of giving, which will be of benefit at the time of death. The Yoga of Giving and Taking is a practice of giving which is very effective in habituating our mind with this thought of giving.

Our practice of giving will become a practice of the Perfection of Giving if we include the right motivation, understanding and dedication. Overcoming any attachment to the object we are giving can also be a cause to make our practice a Perfection. Then having given, it is important to not feel regret about having given an object. Not having attachment and so on can add some

quality of Perfection to our practice. We should also not have great pride in performing this great practice of giving.

422.331.112 The Giving Of Dharma

The giving of Dharma is something that anyone can do, because it involves the thought of benefiting others. With this motivation we give Dharma to others, and it might just be giving a few words or lines. There are no formal rules about performing this practice of giving Dharma - you can do it even in a casual conversation.

In order to give Dharma to others it is not necessary to be a Dharma teacher, so everyone has the opportunity to give Dharma to other beings. It is also possible to give Dharma by transforming your daily practice such as your daily recitation of prayers and mantras, or walking around the stupa, or reading Dharma texts. You do this by imagining that while you do your daily practice, the ground surrounding you is filled with sentient beings who have come to listen to the recitation. You can also imagine that even the air above you is filled with godly beings, who are in space because they do not like to be on the ground. If it is convenient, recite the words loud enough for others to hear. Including these visualisations makes your practice of recitation into the practice of giving Dharma.

In your visualisation, also imagine that as the sentient beings hear the words of Dharma from you, they become free of the suffering of mental delusions, and they experience the nectar of Dharma. Think of all the other sentient beings above and around you, and imagine that your recitation has the effect of removing their suffering, and that they experience bliss.

For the coming examination Geshe-la recommends these lines from *Seven-Point Thought Transformation*.

“Gather together the abridged quintessence of this advice.

Blend together the practice of one life with the five forces

The instruction for great vehicle transmission of consciousness is to apply those very five forces, lying in the perfect position.”

This compulsory question is from the fourth point “Consolidating a lifetime’s practice into one.”

Headings with outline numbering are derived from the Text. Headings without outline numbering are derived from Geshe Doga’s commentary.

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Note on authentication

The original typescript is prepared by Kathi Melnic from Alan Molloy’s original transcript, which has been checked against Damien Busby’s notes. Adair Bunnett then checks the typescript against a tape recording, and edits the text, which is finally checked by Alan Molloy.

¹ Editor: In some explanations there are four types of giving. The additional one not mentioned here is the Giving of Love. As Geshe-la later mentioned this Giving of Love is not mentioned here since love was extensively explained in the preceding sections on The Yoga of Giving and Taking.

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STUDY GROUP DISCUSSION NIGHT - 11th May 1999

Covering discourses 13/04/1999 - 04/05/1999

1. **'Cherish the in-depth and broad application of all skill.'**
What can we understand from this advice on the Thought Transformation practice?
2. **'Depend not on other circumstances. Exert yourself, especially at this time'**
When is the best time to practice Dharma? Why?
3. **'Do not follow inverted deeds.'**
List the six 'inverted deeds' and give a brief description.
4. **'Do not be erratic.'**
Why is it so important to undertake our practice consistently?
5. **'Be liberated by two: examination and analysis.'**
How should we apply this advice to our meditation practice?
6. **'Do not wish for gratitude'**
Why is wishing for gratitude seen as a fault in the Mahayana practice?
7. How do the 6 perfections create the two causes of a buddha's form and truth body, and which perfections are related to each cause?
8. What are the 2 accumulations and how are the perfections related to the 2 accumulations?
9. Why do we need to practise each of the 6 perfections?
10. What is the practice of giving and what are its qualities?
11. What problems arise if we don't practise giving?
12. What are the 2 types of giving, and in particular the practice of giving Dharma?

Compulsory Question

Discuss the meaning of the following verse which is found under the 4th heading of the Seven Point Thought Transformation - 'Consolidating our Practice into One Lifetime'

'Gather together the abridged quintessence of this advice. Blend the practice of one life with the five forces. The instructions for

the great vehicle transmigration of consciousness is to apply those very five forces, lying in the perfect position.'

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Study Group Test

18th May, 1999

Answer any four from question no 1 to 6

Question no 7 is compulsory

Time allowed one hour

1. List the six inverted deeds and give a brief description.
2. 'Do not be erratic.' Why is it so important to undertake our practice with ease and consistency?
3. 'Do not wish for gratitude.' Explain.
4. Why are all the deeds of Bodhisattvas included within the six perfections?
5. How are the six perfections related to the two accumulations?
6. What is the practice of the giving and what are its qualities?
7. **COMPULSORY**

Explain the meaning of the following lines from the root text:

"Gather together the abridged quintessence of the advice. Blend the practice of one life with the five forces. The instructions for the great vehicle transmigration of consciousness is to apply those very five forces, lying in the perfect position."