

Homework

Nov 13th, 2018 teachings

1. Discuss the benefits of the practice of giving, and the shortcomings of attachment or stinginess.

If you do not stop attachment, you will become dominated by it, build up great wrongdoing, and proceed to miserable realms.

Consider also the *Formula That Accomplishes Limitless Methods (Ananta-mukha-nirhāra-dhāraṇī)*:

As to living beings who dispute with others,
It is tight-fistedness that is the root cause.
So, renounce that which you crave.
After you give up craving, the formula will work.

The *Compendium of Trainings* says:

My body and mind
Move on moment by moment.
If with this impermanent body, dripping with filth,
I attain enlightenment,
Which is permanent and pure,
Will I not have attained what is priceless?

The *Compendium of Trainings* reminds us about the transient nature of our body and mind which changes from moment to moment. For example, the body and mind we have now are already different from what we had before we entered into this hall. However, if we utilise this transient impure body to achieve the everlasting state of enlightenment, then it's saying that we have attained something priceless.

Next:

The *Garland of Birth Stories (Jātaka-mālā)* states:

This body devoid of self, perishing, without substance,
Suffering, ungrateful, and continually impure
Is of benefit to others; not to delight in this
Is not to be intelligent.

Here it is describing the nature of this body as *perishing, without substance, suffering, ungrateful, and continually impure*. And also, no matter how much we serve this body, in return it does not do us any favours, so it is said to be *ungrateful*. Despite this fact, if we use it to benefit others by overcoming attachment, then as it says, *not to delight in this is not to be intelligent*.

It continues:

Though you make much effort to care for your body, which has no substance, you have to discard it. By sincerely giving it away to others you fulfil many of your own and others' aims. After you think, "I would be a fool not to train my mind to do this," do whatever you can to produce the thought of giving away your body and the like to others.

In a very condensed way, the text explains here the nature of this body, how it lacks substance and consists of impurities and fifths, and how we inevitably discard it at the end. Yet, we get so attached to it and make a great deal of effort and endure

hardship in maintaining it. The point here is that rather than being attached to the body, *by sincerely giving it away to others you fulfil many of your own and others' aims. After you think, "I would be a fool not to train my mind to do this."* So, as you read this, it's important to reflect on the meaning for a little while and in that way, it has some effect on your mind.

Then the text continues:

Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds says:

By giving everything away, I pass from sorrow,
So my mind reaches nirvāṇa.
As I have to give up everything [at death],
It is best to give it to living beings.

And the *Compendium of the Perfections* says:

If you see the impermanence of resources
And naturally have great compassion
You will know with good reason that the gifts
You have kept in your house belong to others.

There is never fear from what has been given away;
What is kept at home gives rise to fears
That it is insufficient, ordinary, or needing constant protection.
If you give it away, these faults never harm you.

By giving you achieve happiness in future lives;
Not giving brings suffering even in this life.
Human wealth is like a shooting star —
What is not given away will cease to exist.

Wealth not given is transitory and will be gone;
By giving it away it remains a treasury.
Wealth of no value comes to have value

2. How can one overcome attachment to wealth and increase the thought of giving

The wise praise giving wealth away,
Childish persons like to hoard it;
No wealth is kept by holding on to it;
From giving it away excellence always arises.

By giving things away, you no longer grasp the afflictions;
Being miserly breeds afflictions on an ignoble path.
Noble beings say generosity is the best path,
While its opposite is a bad path.

I'll give a brief explanation of the literal meaning of this quotation from the *Compendium of the Perfections*. Essentially, it's self-explanatory if you read slowly and think over the meaning. You will find it very effective for your meditation to overcome attachment to wealth and increase the thought of giving, thereby making your wealth a worthy cause for many benefits.

If you see the impermanence of resources and naturally have great compassion, this shows that reflecting on the impermanence of the things can induce compassion for other beings.

Whereas when it says, *you will know with good reason that the gifts you have kept in your house belong to others*, it means it's like entrusting all your possessions to other beings temporarily, so they really don't belong to you but belong to them. If you think in this way, it says, *there is never fear from what has been given away*. Conversely, *what is kept at home gives rise to fears, that it is insufficient, ordinary*, which elucidates the shortcomings of attachment, obsession and craving towards wealth and possessions. A great deal of stress arises from accumulating and protecting wealth, there is fear of losing it, worrying if you have enough or if it is good enough. Whereas if you give it away, *these faults never harm you*, so that's what it is saying here.

3. What is the benefit of generosity of dedicating our virtue?

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3. How does a Bodhisattva engage in the practice of generosity?

The *Compendium of the Perfections* states:

Bodhisattvas give up all possessions
That intensify the fault of stinginess
Or that do not expand generosity,
The deceivers that become an obstacle.
Bodhisattvas should not accept
Jewels, wealth, or even a kingdom
If it would harm their generous attitude and
Obscure the path to perfect enlightenment.

These lines reflect the true practice of giving thoughts and deeds by bodhisattvas. They are determined to overcome all the hindrances to their practice of the thought of giving. They have not only given away all their possessions by seeing them as a cause of stinginess or attachment that will affect their wish to increase the intention to give, but also they will not accept or receive any goods including *Jewels, wealth, or even a kingdom if it would harm their generous attitude and obscure the path to perfect enlightenment*. So, those who follow the bodhisattva path find this kind of instruction very striking.

And the text then continues:

When you act in this way, stinginess may lead you to feel attached to your goods. If so, become unattached by thinking, "The Sage reached enlightenment after he gave away every possession. Previously, recalling my commitment to emulate him, I gave away my body, every resource, and all my virtue to all living beings. If I am still attached to resources, I am behaving just like an elephant, oppressed by the sun, who goes into the water and bathes and then, back on dry land, rolls in the dirt. Then again, after it sees that it is covered in dirt, it goes back into the water and does the same thing over again."

The *Compendium of the Perfections* says:

Recalling the superior deeds of the sages,
Strive at them and reflect on your commitment;
Understand the following excellent thoughts
In order to clear away your attachment to things:
"I gave away my body to all beings;
Then I relinquished the virtue of this gift.
My being attached to external objects
Is senseless, like an elephant's bathing."

If you are able to generate intense delight as you contemplate the many benefits of giving things away and great fear as you reflect on the faults of tightfistedness, you will naturally produce a generous attitude.