
The Six Perfections

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

13 November 2018

We will begin with our usual giving and taking meditation.

Try to cultivate the proper motivation by thinking, 'I will listen to this profound teaching to achieve full enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, and I will put it into practice.'

The meditation we have just performed is called *tong-len* in Tibetan or 'giving and taking'. With the 'giving' we focus on sentient beings as an observed object of love and wish them to have happiness. With the 'taking', we focus on sentient beings as an observed object of compassion and wish them to be free from suffering. This meditation is very profound and reflects the essence of Dharma practice which is to benefit all sentient beings by giving them happiness and eliminating their suffering. There is no practice more effective and powerful than cultivating love and compassion to benefit other sentient beings. The more love and compassion that we cultivate towards other sentient beings, the more benefits we will receive as well.

Therefore, it is crucial that our meditation on love and compassion, such as the giving and taking meditation that we have been doing for a long time now, actually gives rise to love and compassion within our continuum. Does it? As a result of it, we should feel more love and care for those we live with and interact with in our daily lives. Love and compassion brings mutual benefit in the form of joy, happiness and care and support. On the other hand, if love and compassion are lacking, then there is more distrust, conflict and harmful actions in the human-to-human relationship.

Therefore, we should clearly understand the advantages of cultivating love and compassion, and the disadvantages of not cultivating it; not only in relation to other sentient beings but also with ourselves. This is a very important step in motivating ourselves to cultivate love and compassion. We have to understand that benefiting other beings is benefiting ourselves, likewise harming other beings is harming ourselves. Here we start to talk about our mental attitudes. Without love and compassion, our mental attitude becomes very much self-centred, and hypocritical with no care or consideration for other beings. If we see actions in terms of satisfying our needs, so we have no hesitation in taking any course of action, even it brings harm or loss to others. Unfortunately, the end results of such inconsiderate and selfish actions not only brings harm to other beings but also brings suffering and misery to ourselves. From the perspective of Dharma, as these actions cause harm to other beings, they are negative or non-virtuous actions, the result of which is definitely suffering.

Once again, we should bear in mind that the practice of cultivating love and compassion within ourselves is very beneficial, not only for others but also for our own lives.

In practice, if we develop love and compassion it has an immediate effect of bringing more joy and happiness into our lives. It is also important to know how to effectively put it into practice. What does cultivating love and compassion for other beings mean? Normally it doesn't occur to us that it means to bring love and compassion into our everyday relationships and interactions. Rather, when we think of cultivating love and compassion for other beings, we think of other beings in a broad sense, without having any connection with any real beings. This is wrong. We have learnt that in practical terms we need to first include those who are close to us, such as our close family or friends, as objects of meditation for cultivating love and compassion. After that, we can then include strangers, and finally even enemies. In this way, it becomes possible to cultivate love and compassion for all sentient beings

The value and benefit that love and compassion adds to our lives is just amazing. If we speak of a relationship between even just two people, if it is grounded on true feeling of love, care and concern for each other, it would be very harmonious, and both will benefit from it tremendously. As a benefit of the love that exists in their relationship, they will find enough happiness and satisfaction with whatever they have got. They will be very contented and not look for anything more. They will share whatever they have got and take good care of each other. They can live happily even if they don't have millions of dollars in their bank accounts. It's not the material wealth, but the richness of love and compassion within us that brings happiness and satisfaction to ourselves and other beings. Alternatively, if instead of love and compassion we have even one person who holds a malicious thought, then that's one too many because he or she can cause great harm to a lot of people.

We have been doing the meditation of giving and taking for quite a while. We have to check whether as a result of engaging in the meditation it is helping us cultivate and increase love and compassion, especially towards those who are closest to us. I have been leading this meditation so I have to say, I admire those of you who think your love and compassion has increased following this meditation; but I have to say to others, I am sad if this meditation has not had the effect of increasing love and compassion in your mind, or if you are not following the meditation instruction properly.

(b') How to begin the development of generosity (cont.)

The text states:

Simply destroying all stinginess in regard to your body and resources is not the perfection of generosity, for stinginess is included within attachment and so even the two kinds of Hinayāna arhats have totally eliminated it along with its seeds.

In last week's teaching we covered the nature of the practice of the perfection of giving, which is to do with cultivating and developing the intention of giving. As

part of developing that, one needs to reflect upon the benefits of the practice of giving, and the shortcomings of attachment or stinginess.

The text continues:

What is required then, is that you not only clear away stinginess and tight-fistedness, which prevents giving things away, but also that you develop from the depths of your heart the intention to give away to others all your possessions. For this you have to meditate on the faults of holding onto things and the benefits of giving them away. I shall, therefore, discuss these.

The Moon Lamp Sūtra (Candra-pradīpa-sūtra) says:

These childish people are attached
To this rotting body and to this
Rushing life-force, both of which lack independence
And are like a dream or a magician's illusion.
So these unintelligent beings do terrible things,
Fall under the control of sin,
And, carried away by the chariot of Death's Lord,
Proceed to unbearable hells.

This says that you should stop attachment to the body by viewing it as unclean, life as rushing like a mountain cascade, both body and life as devoid of an independent self because they are under the control of karma, and both as false like a dream or a magician's illusion.

We finished at this point last week. There's an emphasis here about the faults or shortcomings of attachment to body and life. I want you to read the text slowly and think over its meaning. Think about the analogies of a dream and the magician's illusion, how it is used to understand the meaning of emptiness and to counter attachment. You will find it very effective.

Where it says, *devoid of an independent self because they are under the control of karma*, this implies the meaning of dependent origination in terms of the law of cause and effect.

And then, *and both as false like a dream or a magician's illusion*, implies the meaning of dependent origination in terms of emptiness, a very subtle concept of dependent origination.

The text continues:

Furthermore, 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-nīrhāra-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 filth, 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
When you strive to help living beings.

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.

It continues:

If you dedicate from the depths of your heart all roots of virtue, however great or small they may be, for the sake of accomplishing both temporarily and ultimately extensive benefit and happiness for all living beings, and then give something, you obtain merit related to each living being.

Here, the text shows the benefits of giving away your virtues by dedicating them to benefit all sentient beings. As we discussed the other day, dedicating merit or virtues towards others is also a form of the practice of giving. Therefore, it is saying here that it doesn't matter how small or big our act of virtue, if it is dedicated to all beings, then you accumulate the amount of merit equal to the number of sentient beings. When you dedicate your virtues by thinking, *for the sake of accomplishing both temporarily and ultimately extensive benefit and happiness for all living beings*, it is important to imagine all the sentient beings and their needs in your mind. Their needs include temporary needs in terms of finding them a good rebirth of human or godly being, and their long-term or ultimate need is to be placed in the state of vast everlasting benefit and happiness.

To emphasise the enormity of the merit you accumulate through dedicating your virtue in this way, the text quotes *Precious Garland*, which says:

Were the merit of saying this

To have physical form

It would not fit into universes as numerous

As the grains of the Ganges' sand.

The Bhagavan said this

And there is a logic to it –

The expanse of living beings is immeasurable;

The merit of the wish to help them is the same.

Furthermore, do not hold on to companions and belongings that have prevented you from increasing your ability to give things away, that have intensified your stinginess, that have stopped the development of previously absent inclinations to give, or that have weakened your inclinations to give. Do not take on these kinds of companions or accept these kinds of material gifts even if others offer them.

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.

If you have a copy of this text, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path*, it is very good to read it over and over again. As you read, supplicate to Tsongkhapa for his blessing and inspiration, then you'll find this extremely beneficial for your practice. You should read a few lines then sit in silence to reflect on the meaning of what you have read. This would be very beneficial.

[Geshe-la then spoke at some length in English]: You should read Dharma books and contemplate and meditate on their meaning. As the Dharma becomes your companion, you no longer have to depend on others to be happy and content with your life. Dharma shows us a way to access peace and happiness from within us. If you are happy and content from within, you don't have to do something externally to be happy or overcome restlessness, such as shopping, going somewhere or meeting people etc. True happiness and peace, a sense of the purpose of life, arises as you develop inner qualities such as contentment, loving kindness, bodhicitta and the wisdom of emptiness. If we expect happiness to come from outside such as from other people, then we will never get it. If we rely too much on the right external conditions for our happiness then the result is more suffering such as loneliness, frustration, conflicts etc. Therefore, the most effective and perhaps the easiest way to access happiness is making effort to bring about a positive change within ourselves through cultivating positive mental attitudes and diminishing negative states of mind.

To quote *A Song of Longing for Tara, the Infallible*, by the Buddhist monk Lobsang Tenpey Gyaltzen (1852)

I cannot rely on non-virtuous friends for even a day. They pretend to be close to me and all the while they have in mind the opposite. They are friends when they wish it and enemies when they don't. Since I cannot trust in this kind of friend, you are my best friend. Be close to me, Divine Mother, essence of love. Arouse the great power of your compassion and think of me.

I'm giving this advice because I consider all of you as very close and old friends of mine. So, please do not consider it as something to make myself an important person. It is in my nature not to easily become friends with others, but when they become my friends, I am firm in my friendship with them and cherish that friendship. You are all my friends. Once in a casual conversation, the late Kensur Legden admired me for my friendly nature by saying, 'Who doesn't get along with you?' I think having a friendly nature is another good source of finding joy and happiness in life.

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Sandup Tsering
Edit 2 by Jill Lancashire
Edited Version*

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Homework

Nov 13th, 2018 teachings

- 1. Discuss the benefits of the practice of giving, and the shortcomings of attachment or stinginess.**
- 2. How can one overcome attachment to wealth and increase the thought of giving**
- 3. What is the benefit of generosity of dedicating our virtue?**
- 4. How does a Bodhisattva engage in the practice of generosity?**

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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.

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

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Noble beings say generosity is the best path,
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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?

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And the text then continues:

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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20 November 2018

We will start with the usual meditation.

[Meditation]

Please make sure that you cultivate the bodhicitta motivation.

If you can't generate uncontrived bodhicitta, you can generate a contrived or artificial bodhicitta, which will suffice. The primary difference between contrived and uncontrived bodhicitta is that the uncontrived bodhicitta of aspiring to achieve complete enlightenment in order to alleviate the sufferings of other beings, and wishing them to have happiness, arises naturally and spontaneously. It is rooted in the strong force of love and compassion for all sentient beings that also arises spontaneously and forcefully. Whereas contrived bodhicitta arises as an effect of our effort and progress in meditation, and mental training in using instructions on how to generate bodhicitta, such as the sevenfold cause and effect method. The bodhicitta that arises from that is contingent upon the individual's effort in meditation and training, and so it is called contrived bodhicitta.

The first of the sevenfold points of generating bodhicitta is (1) contemplating and (2) recognising all sentient beings as your mother and then remembering their kindness, which is then followed by (3) cultivating a sense of wanting to repay their kindness followed by (4) cultivating the loving kindness that is a deep sense of endearment, a feeling of intimacy and closeness towards all sentient beings. From this arises (5) compassion, which aspires to alleviate the suffering of other beings, as well as love, in the sense of wishing them to have happiness. As you further develop this love and compassion, your aspiration to benefit others moves from being merely wishful thinking to a more active intention. Propelled by love and compassion, (6) you begin to think 'I will single-handedly liberate all beings from suffering and lead them to the everlasting state of happiness.' Taking up the task of personally freeing other beings and wishing them to have happiness from the depths of your heart is called 'superior intention'. This superior intention marks a highly developed degree of love and compassion and aspiration to benefit other beings. With superior intention, your aspiration to benefit others becomes so strong that you want to free all other beings from suffering and bestow everlasting happiness on them. (7) Realising that you do not have such a capacity and that the only person who is capable of doing this is a buddha, you aspire to achieve the state of buddhahood for the sake of all beings. The stronger the force of your superior intention, the stronger your aspiration and urge to achieve buddhahood will be.

Bodhicitta is a wish or aspiration to achieve buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings. In the initial stage of development, bodhicitta is contrived because it is contingent upon a deliberate effort on your part. However, it will arise with less and less effort as a result of your continuous effort in sustaining and developing bodhicitta in this way. Eventually, no effort will be needed, and it will arise

spontaneously and forcefully. This is called uncontrived bodhicitta.

Bodhicitta incorporates two aspirations – the aspiration to achieve one's own goal and the aspiration to achieve the goal of other beings.

In terms of the order of cultivating these two aspirations, the aspiration to achieve the goal of other beings is cultivated prior to the aspiration to achieve one's own goal. In the sevenfold cause and effect method, all the steps that are associated with generating love and compassion relate to cultivating an altruistic thought of benefiting others, so they reflect training in an aspiration to achieve the goal of others. After superior intention arises, you generate a wish to achieve buddhahood which reflects your own ultimate goal. Therefore, the aspiration to achieve your own goal arises simultaneously with the cultivation of bodhicitta. However, when we talk about actually fulfilling these two aspirations, then we notice that the aspiration to achieve one's own goal is accomplished prior to the aspiration to achieve the goal of others.

At the moment we may not have the capacity to generate uncontrived bodhicitta. We do, however, have an opportunity to develop a contrived bodhicitta mind. I think it is extremely important that we make an effort to generate bodhicitta. You have been studying bodhicitta over many years and have heard the word 'bodhicitta' from me so frequently. You have learnt about the great many benefits of generating bodhicitta, not only in terms of benefitting others but also the benefits for yourself.

In my view, there is no more effective and powerful means of subduing your own mind than bodhicitta. You can apply all kinds of other practices but none of them will work to calm your thoughts and deeds. So, if you want to subdue or calm your mind, you must sincerely cultivate bodhicitta within your continuum.

Of course, it would be a different story if you didn't know anything about the true means of subduing your mind. In that case, you would just have to apply whatever method that you know, such as a relaxation meditation technique of simply resting the mind on a given object. However, that doesn't apply to you, as you have invested a great deal of time and effort in learning about Dharma as an effective means of subduing the mind. So, it would be very unfortunate if you don't apply this profound knowledge and, I have to say, it would make me sad.

Loving-kindness is one of the causes in the sevenfold cause and effect method for generating bodhicitta. Loving-kindness is a very general English term and requires some further clarification here, where it is considered as a cause for generating compassion. Hence, it listed before compassion. Generally speaking, we understand love or loving kindness to be a mental attitude of wishing others to have happiness.

From this perspective, the relationship between loving kindness and compassion is not one of cause and effect. Hence, there is no definitive order in the way they arise or whether one necessarily precedes the other. However, in the context of the sevenfold cause and effect method, as I mentioned earlier, loving kindness specifically refers to a sense of endearment, intimacy, closeness, and affectionate love that you feel towards others, which, in this technique, is a necessary cause for cultivating compassion. We find out

about such contextual meanings and fine distinctions in the major scriptures of the early masters.

It doesn't matter if we don't gain any realisations straight away as a result of whatever effort we put into Dharma in this life. However, it will at least leave a good imprint in our continuum. As an effect of that, we can be sure that in our future lives we will definitely and continuously meet with a perfect Mahayana spiritual guru and under their guidance, we will progress to the perfect state of complete enlightenment. It is most unlikely and extremely difficult for us to achieve full enlightenment within this life. Although the secret mantra shows a quick path to enlightenment in a single lifetime, in practice it is extremely difficult. Therefore, our best chance to achieve complete enlightenment is by depending upon a gradual progression along the path through a series of many subsequent rebirths. That is why I am saying that it is very important that we focus our spiritual practice on what is within our reach, and directly related to our current situation. Then you will find studying Dharma and putting it into practice in whatever way you can will be more effective and beneficial now and in the long term.

We will now continue with the teaching.

(b') How to begin the development of generosity

We left off at this point last week, but we'll read it again:

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.

The clarification to make here is that *I gave away my body* may literally sound OK. However, if we take, *I relinquished the virtue* literally it may sound like we are relinquishing virtue. Of course, this doesn't mean giving up on Dharma or virtues. Rather it means giving Dharma or virtues to others.

The text continues:

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.

We need to take this as Lama Tsongkhapa's spiritual experience. He is saying here that if you contemplate the benefit of the practice of giving, the thought of giving will arise spontaneously and forcefully – *it will naturally produce a generous attitude*.

Then:

Accordingly, generate the thought of giving away everything to others at the conclusion of cultivating love and compassion, or at the conclusion of reflecting on the life stories of the Conqueror, his children, and so forth.

This emphasises that the purpose of cultivating love and compassion for other beings is to increase the thought of

giving or, in other words, to be able to engage in the practice of giving. As well, *reflecting on the life stories of the Conqueror, and his children* (such as bodhisattvas) is also to increase the practice of giving.

The text continues :

Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds states how this is done:

I will give away without a sense of loss
My body and my resources
As well as all my virtue from the past, present, and future
For the welfare of all living beings.

So the objects to be given are one's *body*, one's *resources* or possessions and all one's *virtues*. Here, *without a sense of loss* implies no sense of stinginess, attachment or miserliness – one gives to others wholeheartedly. The benefit of developing the thought or intention of giving lies in counteracting attachment to things and stinginess with sharing them.

The text continues:

You focus on three things – your body, your resources, and your roots of virtue – and mentally give them away to all living beings.

These lines indicate the meditation of giving and taking, which we have been doing. In this meditation, you mentally give away all your belongings to other beings, who receive them and experience virtue in their mind as a result.

Then:

If you stop the craving that conceives everything to be your personal property and then repeatedly condition yourself to the attitude of giving it all away to others, you will be called a bodhisattva.

We need to reflect on the meaning of this line in the context of our own inner continuum. Although it says here, *stop the craving ... condition yourself to the attitude of giving it all away to others, you will be called a bodhisattva*, we remain strongly attached to craving for all our possessions thinking, 'These are my possessions.'

I have been emphasising over and over again to you that when you read the lam-rim, you should read slowly, and contemplate the meaning of every single word and sentence, relating each to your own thoughts and deeds. You will find this method of reading very effective in calming your mind and enhancing your inner peace and happiness. Our minds don't have to always be occupied with the usual objects of distraction. We know from our own experience that this only brings us inner disturbance, chaos and turbulence. We need to break the usual habit of allowing our mind to restlessly wander after various objects. We will find reading the lam-rim text and contemplating its meaning to be very rewarding and effective in calming our mind.

The *Compendium of the Perfections* says:

"All these things are yours;
I have no pride that they are mine."
Someone who has this amazing thought repeatedly
And emulates the qualities of the perfect Buddha
Is called a bodhisattva – so said
The inconceivable Buddha, the supreme being.

At present, as your determination has not matured and is weak, you do not actually give away flesh, etc., though you have already mentally given your body to all beings.

As I mentioned earlier, it is important to read each sentence and then pause to reflect on its meaning in the context of your own practice. This is saying that at the moment, our

practice of giving may only be on a mental level as we are not in a position to actually give away things to others. So, you might wonder about the point of doing that.

The text then offers the answer:

According to the *Compendium of Trainings*, however, if you do not train in the thought of giving away your body and life, you will not become accustomed to it and so will remain incapable of giving away your body and life. Therefore, from now on cultivate this thought.

It is said only those on the bodhisattva *bhumi* level can actually give away their body or lives to benefit other beings. Having said that, there are some ordinary people in the community who donate body parts such as a kidney to others. That's a worthy cause. Generally speaking, before we can engage in giving away our body and indeed our lives, we need to train and habituate our mind with the thought of giving. When the thought of giving is sufficiently developed, the actual act of giving will naturally take place. That is what the text is saying here.

We need to understand, contemplate and meditate on the Dharma. In this way, we will receive its true blessing. That blessing is not going to come from outside of us; it comes from our own Dharma knowledge and practice. Then the text continues:

If you use food, clothes, shelter and so on that you have sincerely given away to all beings, and you do so with craving for your personal welfare, forgetting the thought, "I will use them for others' welfare," then you commit a major infraction.

There are different layers of meaning here. On one level this responds to doubts or questions concerning offerings to the Triple Gem. Some people have asked me what you do with the food and drink you have offered to the Triple Gem. As clearly stipulated here, if you take those offerings *with craving for your personal welfare*, then you commit a major infraction, that is, an afflictive infraction or downfall. Therefore, the advice is to use the offerings with a motivation to benefit other beings, *I will use them for others' welfare*.

Here we are talking about consuming things that we have wholeheartedly dedicated or given to others. Having forgotten about the fact that these things have been given to others, it is saying here that if you utilise those things with craving for your personal welfare or satisfaction, you commit a major infraction, or an afflictive downfall (Tib: *Nyon.mongs-pai lTung.ba*). However, if you utilise those things, not out of craving for personal welfare, but either because you forget to include all beings in your intention, or because you utilise those things for a particular living being out of attachment, then you will be committing a minor infraction, a non-afflictive downfall (Tib.: *Nyon.mongs ma.yin.pai lTung.ba*). The text states:

When you have no craving but forget to apply the idea of focusing on all living beings, or if you use those resources for a particular living being out of attachment, you commit a minor infraction.

When it says *if you use those resources for a particular living being out of attachment* the indication is that you use those resource for the sake of another living being out of attachment.

It continues:

With regard to the material goods that you have turned over to others, the *Compendium of Trainings* states that when you use them for your own welfare fully cognizant of their

being the property of others, you are stealing, and if the total value is enough, you commit a cardinal transgression of the vows of individual liberation.

This refers to whether or not the act of stealing is qualified as an act of a cardinal transgression, which in Tibetan is *pham.pa* or transgression of any root vows of an ordained person. Some argue about the occurrence of the transgression or *pham.pa*. As the text says:

In response to this, some say that since you have turned over your food, etc., to all living beings, it is impossible for the total value of any one being's portion to be enough, so you cannot commit a cardinal transgression. Others say this is not correct because you have turned over your belongings as a whole to each being individually. Others argue that even though you have mentally surrendered them to others, they do not take personal possession of them, so there is no cardinal transgression.

The intended meaning of the *Compendium of Trainings* is then summarised.

You incur a cardinal transgression (given that the total value requirement has been met) when you sincerely turn your food, etc., over to a human being, and this person knows it and takes possession, whereupon you, fully cognizant of their being another's property, appropriate them for your own use. Therefore, the positions stated by the others are wrong.

Here, Lama Tsongkhapa clarifies what is mentioned in the *Compendium of Trainings*, with respect to the occurrence of a cardinal transgression or *pham.pa*. Just as the consummation of a non-virtuous act such as killing is dependent upon meeting certain factors in the stages of committing the act, whether or not the act of stealing is considered as a cardinal transgression (Tib: *pham.pa*) is also dependent on certain factors.

As Lama Tsongkhapa clarifies it, *when you sincerely turn your food, etc., over to a human being*, the recipient is a human being who knows or is aware of the object being given, and who then takes ownership of that object. In this kind of scenario, if you make use of the object for your own purpose with the recognition that the object has been given to the recipient, then it said *given that the total value requirement has been met*, the act will be considered as a cardinal transgression or *pham.pa*. Then the text continues:

There is no fault in using some living beings' resources if you think, while using them, "I do this for their welfare." The *Compendium of Trainings* states:

There is no fault in using things if you think, "I am taking care of my body which is owned by others with these resources that are owned by others." Slaves have no material goods of their own with which to survive.

Here is a different scenario. It says here that it's fine to use things that have been dedicated or wholeheartedly given to others if the reason for using them is to benefit others. Sometimes people give things away to others, and then, later on, they decide to use those things by saying to other people they are doing so for their benefit. That seems to be acceptable, doesn't it?

From one aspect we can take what is being said here as an instruction for our everyday life. It shows us what kind of motivation we should have before acquiring things and while utilising things. For instance, in cultivating the thought or intention of giving, then our motivation for utilising things should be to benefit others. It continues:

You may think, "I incur a fault because, after I have turned over these belongings to living beings, I use them without their permission," but there is no fault. The *Compendium of Trainings* says:

A servant who labors hard on a master's behalf might use the master's belongings without permission when the master's mind is unclear due to illness and so forth, but incurs no fault.

Here the emphasis is on your motivation. If your motivation is to protect the interest of other beings, then it can be permissible to use the belongings of others. For example, a slave's act of utilising the master's belongings to save his master's life is not morally a wrong action. Similarly, as part of practising the bodhisattva deeds we should ensure that our motivation in utilising things is to benefit other beings, and that it is not stained with attachment to, or craving for, the objects you have given to others.

We are reading this profound text and going over its meaning together. In fact, you can read it and learn by yourself. This text provides the key points of Dharma practice and everything you need to know about your Dharma practice. As I have been saying, it is very important you read the text thoroughly and slowly. As you read, think and meditate over its meaning, you will find this way of learning very effective for your practice and also for enhancing a calm, clear mind of wisdom.

In essence, we must put our knowledge of Dharma into practice and integrate it into our everyday activities. For example, whenever we drink or eat something, we should recite the OM AH HUNG mantra three times and reflect upon the meaning of the mantra. The three syllables of the mantra can be explained together or individually.

To explain the meaning of the whole mantra, the three rounds of the recitation implies the purification, transformation and inexhaustibility of the offering objects. The first recitation of the mantra purifies the offering objects of all bad smells, appearance, colour, taste etc.; the second recitation transforms the objects into uncontaminated nectar and; the third recitation makes the objects inexhaustible.

As to the meaning of the mantra in terms of each individual syllable, then, the OM represents the seed syllable of the holy body which is associated with Vairochana Buddha; AH represents the seed syllable of the holy speech associated with Amitabha Buddha; and the HUNG represents the seed syllable of the holy or omniscient mind associated with Akshobhya Buddha.

Accordingly, you should think of this meaning of the mantra as you recite it, either when actually making an offering, or blessing an inner offering in a ritual. As we have discussed earlier, we need to ensure our motivation for eating and drinking is primarily to sustain a long and healthy life in order to practise Dharma, helping it to flourish and to benefit other sentient beings. As to the food or drink going into our body, think of giving it to the countless bacteria whose survival inside us depends on it. As a result of receiving food and drink you imagine that these bacteria experience uncontaminated bliss. You then pray: At the moment I am benefiting them only through material aid; may I soon be able to benefit them by giving Dharma teachings.

Next week we will have a teaching break so you can have a discussion session.

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Sandup Tsering
Edit 2 by Adair Bunnett
Edited Version*

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1. a) What do we need to do in order to naturally produce a generous attitude?

b) What is the purpose of cultivating love and compassion for other beings?

2. What are the objects to be given away?

3. Although it says here, *stop the craving...condition yourself to the attitude of giving it all away to others, you will be called a bodhisattva*, we remain strongly attached to craving for all our possessions thinking, 'These are my possessions.' In relation to this statement what is the purpose of reading and contemplating the Lam Rim?

4. a) How does one commit a major infraction with regards to offerings to the Triple Gem?

b) How does one commit a minor infraction with regards to offerings to the Triple Gem?

The Six Perfections

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

4 December 2018

We will begin with the usual meditation. [*Tong-len meditation*]

(b') How to begin the development of generosity (cont.)

We will just go over the last few passages that we finished in the last session.

The *Compendium of Trainings* states:

There is no fault in using things if you think, "I am taking care of my body which is owned by others with these resources that are owned by others." Slaves have no material goods of their own with which to survive.

You may think, "I incur a fault because, after I have turned over these belongings to living beings, I use them without their permission," but there is no fault. The *Compendium of Trainings* says:

A servant who labors hard on a master's behalf might use the master's belongings without permission when the master's mind is unclear due to illness and so forth, but incurs no fault.

Here, the text raises the question of whether it is appropriate to utilise other people's belongings without their prior consent. It is a social convention and morally correct to seek permission or check with owners before using their things. We teach this practice to our children too. However, the question raised here is in the context of a different scenario. If you refer to the above passage, you can understand without needing to go into detail the reason why there is no need for prior permission from the owners.

The commentary continues:

Do not lack faith and think, "Mentally giving everything away to living beings while not actually giving it is tantamount to a lie and, therefore, is without real substance." The *Compendium of Trainings* says:

Some people who are close to a bodhisattva who practices in this way fail to understand the bodhisattva's practice accurately and lack faith. This is unwarranted because they are well acquainted with someone who has a great and wonderful spirit of generosity. It is wrong for them to doubt this method.

The issue here is this: suppose you imagine giving things to others while you are not actually giving; doesn't that mean you are lying? It says here that this is not the case at all. In fact, bodhisattvas achieve the perfection of giving by initially habituating their minds with the thought of giving. Hence, the thought of giving is a marvellous quality to possess.

We can relate the question raised here to our everyday life. For example, some people promise they will give gifts to others, but they never give them. Others find this annoying and frustrating, and wonder why that person said they would give but never gave. If you tell a child you will give them a gift, and then don't give it, you will make them unnecessarily anxious and frustrated. Some parents tell their children that everything they own belongs to them (the

children); this makes the children wonder when they will get it!

Naturally then, we may have doubts about the bodhisattva's practice of training in the *thought* of giving. It is, therefore, important for us to understand the meaning and benefit of training in the thought of giving. Through such training, we must give rise to the thought of giving from the depths of our heart. When it says *wonderful spirit of generosity*, this refers to this genuine thought of giving that arises from the depth of our heart.

If we relate this to ourselves, we can understand that our practice of giving starts with having the genuine thought of giving within us. Therefore, we need to meditate on how to cultivate and develop that thought of giving. Based on our own experience, we need to understand the positive effect on our mental continuum when we give rise to the thought of giving – it eliminates stinginess and give us the impetus, later on, to actually give away our things to others without any hesitation when we see they are in need, and we have things to give away.

Now we move onto the next section:

(c') The divisions of generosity

The section on the divisions of generosity has three parts:

1. How everyone should practice it
2. Divisions of generosity relative to particular persons
3. Divisions of actual generosity (Chapters 9-10)

(1') How everyone should practice it

The text explains this in terms of the six excellences or supremacies.

Asaṅga's *Mahāyāna Compendium* says that you practice generosity in association with six supremacies. *Supreme basis* means that you practice generosity based on the spirit of enlightenment; i.e., you act after you have been motivated by it.

We have learned in the past that, for our practice of generosity to be qualified as the practice of the perfection of generosity, an important defining characteristic is the special thought or motivation for engaging in the practice. This motivation should be bodhicitta, the altruistic mind of enlightenment. This is the first supremacy of the *supreme basis*. We have got to remember and ensure that when we engage in the practice of giving, it is based upon or conjoined with the motivation of bodhicitta.

Supreme things means that in general you give all objects that can be given, and, even when you are engaged in specific acts of generosity, you do not give up this thought of giving away everything.

Here, the text is emphasising that even when we engage in the act of giving a specific thing, such as food or drink, we should not forget to think of giving *all* the objects of giving, including our body, resources and virtues.

You do not give up this thought of giving away everything relates to the situation where you engage in the practice of giving a specific thing, such as giving food and drink to alleviate the suffering of hunger and thirst. Even in this situation, mentally you are prepared to give everything away, not just those specific objects that you are giving.

Supreme aim is when you give things away to all living beings for the sake of their immediate happiness and ultimate benefit.

This clearly indicates that the purpose or aim of giving is to fulfil the immediate and ultimate purposes of the recipients.

It also indicates that the intention of giving should be unbiased or impartial, not discriminating between sentient beings.

Supreme skill-in-means is said to be when generosity is imbued with non-conceptual sublime wisdom; beginning bodhisattvas should take this to be the wisdom that knows the lack of intrinsic nature in objects.

The *supreme skill* or technique is to ensure that when we engage in the practice of giving, it is conjoined with the wisdom of emptiness. However, when the text says *imbued with non-conceptual sublime wisdom*, it refers to the exalted wisdom of superior insight that directly or non-conceptually realises emptiness. Such an exalted wisdom is the quality of arya or superior beings alone, or those who are on the path of seeing or above. Therefore, for *beginning bodhisattvas* – that is, those who have not yet reached the path of seeing, such as those who are on the paths of accumulation and preparation, or those who are ordinary beings – the *supreme skill* refers to the wisdom that knows the lack of intrinsic nature, that is, the wisdom of emptiness.

We can note here the mention of bodhicitta as the superior motivation, the wisdom of emptiness as the superior wisdom, and dedicating to complete enlightenment as the superior dedication. We have learned in the past that conjoining these three superior qualities with our practices, such as the practice of giving, will make that practice the perfection of giving. As to the view of emptiness, the various Buddhist schools of tenets have their own interpretation.

Supreme dedication means that you dedicate the virtue from generosity to complete enlightenment.

This is to emphasise that you dedicate the virtue you have created through engaging in the practice of giving to achieving complete enlightenment. Again, we should take note from our past study of the differences between dedication and prayer. Dedication requires a certain object or substance, in the form of virtue or merit, to be dedicated. When we speak of prayer, on the other hand, it simply means wishing for something: for example, we can simply pray by saying, 'May I have this or that' – we can pray for anything we like.

Supreme purity is when you stop both the afflictive and cognitive obscurations.

Here, we understand that the reason we engage in the practice is to abandon afflictive and cognitive obscurations.

Overall, we can find some important elements of our practice here. For example, whatever virtuous actions we create, we should always try to remember to rejoice by feeling positive and joyful about them, dedicating our virtuous actions to complete enlightenment and conjoining that with the knowledge of emptiness. Rejoicing causes our virtues to increase and multiply, whereas dedication makes our virtues inexhaustible, in the sense that they will not be destroyed by mental delusions such as anger. Although the six supremacies are explained here in the context of the practice of giving, we should incorporate them into whatever virtuous actions we engage in. In this way our virtuous practice will become more effective and profoundly beneficial.

The six supremacies concern the type of motivation we should have; our willingness to give everything; the supreme aim, which means benefiting all beings, without any sense of a biased or partial attitude; incorporating our

knowledge of emptiness; dedication; and, finally, supreme purity, which is to recognise our practice, such as the practice of giving, as a means to purify or abandon mental obscurations. It is said that simply recognising whatever virtuous actions you undertake as a means to abandon mental afflictions makes them a remedy for purifying those mental afflictions.

The text continues:

Haribhadra's *Long Explanation of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in Eight Thousand Lines* says that you practice generosity with the six perfections present. When you are giving the teachings, for instance, it is extremely powerful if you practice all six perfections.

The text goes on to explain how we can include or incorporate all the six perfections into the practice of each one of them. For example, we can include all six perfections into the practice of giving. In other words, when we engage in the practice of giving, we not only engage in giving, but also engage in the other five perfections of morality, patience, joyous effort, meditative concentration and wisdom. As you have learned in the past, this is similar to consolidating all seven limbs into each limb of the seven limb practice. As it says here, *when you are giving teachings*, you practise giving, as well as the other five perfections, such as morality.

You have ethical discipline when you restrain yourself from the considerations of *śrāvākas* and *pratyekabuddhas*; ...

When it says *restrain yourself*, this implies practising morality within the practice of giving – that is, restraining yourself from the self-concerned mental attitude of *śrāvākas* and *pratyekabuddhas*. Having a self-concerned attitude goes against bodhisattva practice. In fact, curtailing self-concern is considered the root moral ethic of a bodhisattva's practice. Therefore, it is essential for bodhisattvas to possess the moral ethic of restraint from self-concern when they engage in their deeds. This shows how bodhisattvas practise ethics when they engage in the practice of giving.

When you are giving the teachings clearly implies the practice of giving itself. At the same time, the other perfections, such as the perfection of morality and patience, are also implied here.

... patience when you bear any hardship while you aspire to the qualities of omniscience ...

This means that whilst practising giving, bodhisattvas are patient with any obstacles or hardships they face: this is how they include patience in their practice of giving. Patience here includes all types of patience, such as the patience of non-retaliation, and the patience of accepting hardships and suffering. In fact, we can understand the need for patience for the effectiveness and success of all our practices.

... joyous perseverance when you yearn for the ever-greater increase of your generosity; ...

This refers to joyous effort, which is the great level of aspiration, interest and motivation that bodhisattvas show in their deeds of giving.

... meditative stabilization when you dedicate to complete enlightenment the virtue that you cultivate with one-pointed attention unmixed with Hinayāna considerations; ...

While engaging in giving, the bodhisattva's mind is single-pointedly focused on the virtue of achieving complete

enlightenment and benefiting others; it is not tainted by the self-concerned mental attitude of the lesser vehicles.

... and wisdom when you know that the giver, gift, and recipient are like a magician's illusion.

This shows that the bodhisattva's deed of giving also incorporates the perfection of wisdom, which is the understanding of emptiness of the giver, gift and recipient. While engaging in the deed of giving, they see the giver, gift or the object to be given, and the recipient as like a magician's illusion, for they are all devoid of inherent existence.

In this way, you should reflect on the meaning of the text by reading a few lines, contemplating their meaning, then reviewing what you have learned, such as the six supremacies in the practice of giving. It's good to go over them in your mind one by one: supreme basis, thing, aim, means, dedication and purity. Likewise, think over the meaning of consolidating all six perfections into the practice of giving. If you are unsure, then you should simply refer to the text, read it, and think over the meaning again. It is good to get used to this way of learning by relying upon the text, and at the same time, reflecting on its meaning.

(2') Divisions of generosity relative to particular persons

In general it is said that lay bodhisattvas make gifts of material things and renunciate bodhisattvas make gifts of the teachings.

Here, the text indicates that, when we speak of bodhisattvas, there are lay bodhisattvas and renunciate or ordained bodhisattvas. In terms of the practice of giving, the text says that lay bodhisattvas should primarily engage in giving material things, whereas ordained or renunciate bodhisattvas primarily engage in giving or teaching Dharma.

There is then a quotation:

The *Bodhisattva Vows of Liberation (Bodhisattva-prātimokṣa)* says:

Śāriputra, the renunciate bodhisattva who teaches just a single four-line stanza produces much more merit than the lay bodhisattva who makes offerings of buddha-realms filled with jewels, as many in number as the sand grains of the River Ganges, to the tathāgatas, the arhats, the perfectly enlightened buddhas. Śāriputra, the Tathāgata does not permit renunciates to make material gifts.

You will also find the same connotation in other sutras, such as the *Vajra (or Diamond Cutter) Sutra*, where the Buddha advises renunciates or ordained followers to primarily give away Dharma, not material things.

Then the *Compendium of Trainings* (by Shantideva) clarifies the context of the *Tathāgata does not permit renunciates to make material gifts*:

The *Compendium of Trainings* says the Buddha intended here material gifts that would become a hindrance to study and the like.

The *Compendium of Trainings* interpreted the meaning to be that the Buddha's intention was to forbid renunciates from engaging in the giving of material things, because accumulating these things affects the learning, contemplation and meditation practices of the renunciates. This implies that the renunciate must devote his or her time to learning and propagating Dharma. They should not engage in giving material things, if this impedes their learning and practice. The renunciates' primary focus

should be learning and teaching Dharma, not handling or giving material things. However, as it says here:

It is said that renunciates are prohibited from making offerings of material goods that they have worked to obtain, but they must give them away if they obtain many things through the force of their previous merit and without hindering their virtuous activities.

So the text doesn't imply that renunciate followers should not give the material goods to others at all. Renunciates are forbidden to engage in the giving of material things if this interferes with their learning and practice of Dharma. At the same time, the text clarifies here that renunciates must give away material things that they have acquired, without sacrificing any time and effort from their side that will impact their practice, or without causing any harm to their virtuous practice.

For example, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, never pursues material goods, but people make offerings to him, which he gives away to those who are in need or to a good charity or cause. So, the implication is that if an ordained practitioner or renunciate acquires material goods effortlessly by virtue of their past good merit and karma, they should give away those things. Perhaps we can also make an exception for those bodhisattvas who take rebirth as a king or a leader to spread the Dharma and benefit others when, as part of their aspiration to benefit others, they practise the generosity of giving material aid.

The text continues:

Also, Sha-ra-wa (Sha-ra-ba) said:

I am not talking to you about the benefits of giving; I am talking to you about the faults of tightfistedness.

It is displeasing news when renunciates harm their ethical discipline as they strain to the utmost in their search for wealth to give away.

The kadampa Geshe Sharawa clearly says here that it is *displeasing news* if any renunciate takes part in accumulating material things to become a philanthropist, but undermines their own ethical practice or inflates their minds with pride by saying to others: 'I have extended help there'.

(3') Divisions of actual generosity

The presentation of the divisions of actual generosity has three parts:

1. The gift of the teachings
2. The gift of fearlessness
3. Material gifts [Chapters 9-10]

(a'') The gift of the teachings

The gift of the teachings is teaching the sublime teaching without making mistakes, ...

The *sublime teaching* refers to the flawless doctrines, which serve as a cause to achieve the state of liberation or complete enlightenment. You can give teaching to others or facilitate or cause others to give teachings.

... teaching the arts and the like (worldly occupations which are blameless and proper to learn), and involving others in upholding the fundamental precepts.

The giving of teaching also includes teaching or inspiring others to make art works, like drawing mandalas or making stupas. However, when it says here being *blameless and proper to learn*, it means that while working on such arts, one should not commit any misdeeds or non-virtues; rather, one abides by the spiritual precepts as well as *involving others in upholding the fundamental precepts*.

The point being made here is one's act of giving teaching is to inspire or remind others to engage in virtuous practice, by fostering virtuous thoughts or causing them to engage in virtuous actions.

(b'') The gift of fearlessness

The gift of fearlessness is protecting living beings from fear of humans such as kings and robbers, ...

The gift of fearlessness is to protect others from the fear of death – here, it says *such as kings and robbers*, which means saving those who face the death sentence due to a court order or an order by a king, and protecting others from the threat of robbers. These are the fears of death caused by humans; then the text mentions the fears of death caused by non-human factors:

... from fear of non-human beings such as lions, tigers, and crocodiles, and from fear of the elements such as water and fire.

So, there are many situations that present us with an opportunity to practise the giving of fearlessness. For example, we can give fearlessness when we save insects from being drowned, or save animals from bushfire, and so on.

(c'') Material gifts

Material gifts are explained in two parts:

1. The generosity of actually giving material things [Chapters 9-10]
2. The generosity which is just mental [Chapter 10]

(1'') The generosity of actually giving material things

The generosity of actually giving material things has three parts:

1. How to give away material things [Chapters 9-10]
2. What to do if you are unable to give [Chapter 10]
3. Relying on the remedies for the hindrances to generosity [Chapter 10]

(a) How to give away material things

This section has four parts:

1. Recipients of giving
2. The motivation for giving
3. How to give [Chapter 10]
4. Things to give [Chapter 10]

As to the recipients of giving, the text lists ten types of recipients:

(1) Recipients of giving

There are ten of these: (1) friends and relatives who help you, (2) enemies who harm you, (3) ordinary people who neither harm nor help you, (4) those with good qualities such as ethical discipline, (5) those with flaws such as faulty ethical discipline, (6) those inferior to you, (7) those equal to you, (8) those superior to you, (9) the rich and happy, and (10) the miserable and destitute.

We should give to all beings without discrimination; however, there is a reason why the text identifies ten types of recipients. This is to direct our attention to the right kind of motivation or mental attitude that we should have, in contrast to the kind of mental attitude we normally have which depends on the recipient of our giving.

The first two types of recipient listed here are friends and enemies, towards whom our normal attitudes are attachment and hatred, respectively. So, the text is saying here that we must avoid these attitudes. Instead, we should develop love and compassion while performing any act of giving.

Similarly, our normal attitude to ordinary people or neutral beings who neither harm nor help us is indifference or ignorance. So the emphasis here is to show compassion for all beings, regardless of whether they benefit or harm us. They equally deserve our gift of giving.

Those with good qualities, such as ethical discipline, are those noble beings with admirable qualities. The text is saying we should not feel jealous of them but hold them with great admiration and respect.

We should not look down upon, hate or abuse those with flaws such as faulty ethical discipline, but should instead hold them with compassion.

Towards those inferior to us, we should not be arrogant and despise them; rather, we should show a genuine sense of care and compassion, and practise giving to them out of such a loving attitude.

To those equal to us, our normal attitude is competitiveness, which we need to overcome, whereas we need to avoid being jealous of those superior to us.

Towards the rich and happy, we also need to overcome jealousy and we need to hold the miserable and destitute with love and compassion.

With a good knowledge of Dharma and what to do in our practice, we will find our practice becoming more effective, in terms of counteracting mental delusions. We can have a broad knowledge of Dharma, such as the practice of giving. However, as we have found here, if we have a more detailed knowledge of the practice of giving, it makes a difference to our practice.

Understanding the above list of the recipients of giving gives us a different focus in our practice for countering specific mental afflictions. The important thing is that we must try to put our learning into practice as much as possible. Even if our practice doesn't noticeably change our present situation and give us a sense of accomplishment in the short term, it does benefit our mental continuum. As we always say, it leaves a good impression in our continuum.

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Sandup Tsering
Edit 2 by Mary-Lou Considine
Edited Version*

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The Six Perfections

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

11 December 2018

We shall begin with our usual Giving and Taking meditation.

[*tong-len meditation*]

Please reinforce your motivation by thinking: 'I will achieve complete enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings and for this purpose, I will listen to the profound teaching and put it into practice.'

We'll continue from where we left off last week.

(2) The motivation for giving

The motivation for giving has two sections:

1. What kind of motivation is required
2. What kind of motivation must be eliminated

(a') What kind of motivation is required

Your motivation should have three attributes:

It says here, *your motivation should have three attributes*. However, instead of *motivation*, it is more correct to say: the focus of the *thought of giving* has *three attributes*.

Let me first read the three attributes:

- (1) a focus on purpose, which thinks, "Based on this I will complete the perfection of generosity, a precondition for unexcelled enlightenment"; (2) a focus on the thing to be given, which thinks, "From the outset a bodhisattva gives away all possessions to living beings, so the material goods that I am giving belong to others, and it is as if they are receiving things kept in trust"; and (3) a focus on the recipient, which thinks, "Since these recipients, whether asking for the gift or not, bring to completion my perfection of generosity, they are my teachers."

The three attributes focus on the thought, or intention, of giving. The first attribute focuses on the purpose of giving, which is to think that through the practice of giving we will complete the perfection of giving as a means of gathering the accumulation of merit for complete enlightenment.

The second attribute focuses on the object of giving, whereby you think that the object you are giving already belongs to the recipient, or that you are returning the recipients' belongings that had been placed with you in trust. The focus of the third attribute is on the field or recipient. Recipients are the indispensable cause for you to complete the perfection of giving, and thereby achieve complete enlightenment. Therefore, regardless of whether recipients request, or beg, or do neither, they should all be regarded as one's spiritual guides or spiritual teachers.

In alignment with this last attribute, Shantideva's *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* says:

The Buddha's qualities are gained
From sentient beings and the Conqueror alike,
So why do I not respect them
In the same way as I respect the Conquerors?

The Buddha guides us along the path to enlightenment, whereas sentient beings serve as the supreme field to complete all six perfections. However, both buddhas and sentient beings are the same in their ability to enable us to

achieve complete enlightenment, and so both are equally worthy objects of veneration and offering.

The text continues:

The *Compendium of the Perfections* states:

When someone comes to ask for something,
Bodhisattvas, so as to build up the
preconditions for complete enlightenment,
Consider what they have as belonging to
others, give it as from a trust,
And consider the person their teacher.

With respect to giving away individual things, understand in detail from the *Questions of Subāhu Sūtra* (*Subāhu-paripṛcchā*) and the *Compendium of the Perfections*, your motivation's focus on purpose, which is the thought, "I will give this away for this or for that purpose."

As to the focus of your motivation on the recipient, as explained above, it should apply to all situations of generosity, and so be the general motivation.

"The *general motivation* refers to the thought or intention of giving as discussed earlier. It is saying here that in all instances of the practice of giving, the cultivation of a genuine thought of giving is essential.

The text continues:

Specific motivations would be when you make a gift to those who harm you ...

We discussed this last session. This is concerned with the specific mental focus of the practice of giving, such as loving-kindness towards those recipients who harm you. The text says here that even if the recipients respond to your gesture of giving with hatred instead of appreciation, you should still maintain a loving attitude. The text then says:

... once you have established a loving attitude; to those who suffer, once you have established a compassionate attitude; ...

Generally speaking, we all feel compassion when seeing other beings in great pain and suffering. Hence, if recipients are beings who are afflicted with much suffering, then we should try to show a greater sense of empathy and compassion.

The text continues:

... to those who have good qualities, once you have established an attitude of delight; ...

This means that when you give things to those who possess excellent qualities, you should intensify the thought of delight and admiration in their qualities.

... and to those who help you, once you have established an impartial attitude.

As to giving things to those who help you, you need to ensure your attitude is impartial without attachment or aversion.

Moreover, you must be even-minded towards all recipients, give away to living beings—such as those who ask and so forth—all the virtuous results of giving, and, in particular, be compassionate to those recipients who are suffering.

This points out that you should think not only of yourself when giving things, but also any virtues or merits that you accumulate through your act of giving, and the result of those virtues and merits that you will gain in the future.

It's very important that you remember to integrate what you study here into your practice of giving in real-life situations. For example, remember *in particular, to be compassionate to those recipients who are suffering*. Normally, if people are angry at us, or don't appreciate our generosity, we won't give. However, it says here that we should give to them and enhance compassion and loving-kindness towards them.

The text continues.

Candrakirti says:

Once the giving is free from stinginess,
The giver must compassionately make gifts
Which are given equally with an even-mindedness
To those who are superior or inferior recipients.

The results of such giving
Go to both self and other at the same time.
Holy beings praise this giving without stinginess
To those who seek gifts.

Then there is a quote from the *Praise of Infinite Qualities*:

Even when someone sees a hopeful person who is
destitute and of low birth
They do not care and, out of desire for results, seek
other recipients who have good qualities.
They have a base motive; though givers, they are
the same as those asking for gifts, you [Buddha]
said.
Hence, you remain committed out of compassion
to giving to those who ask.

This verse from the *Praise of Infinite Qualities* highlights a very important aspect of the effective practice of giving. It says that the practice of giving is corrupted, or not effective if it is limited only to those recipients from whom we hope to get some sort of reward. Such giving clearly implies some sort of self-interest. This relates to those who give gifts to influential others with the hope of receiving their favours in return, and no consideration of giving to others, particularly those who are destitute and impoverished in miserable living conditions. In relation to this, His Holiness the Dalai Lama remarked that those who completely ignore impoverished beings who truly deserve help and support, while making offerings to those with power and status, are really pathetic!

They have a base motive; though givers, they are the same as those asking for gifts. This means that the deed of giving carried out by these people is not really giving, because it is not intended to benefit others, nor is given out of care, love or compassion for them. Rather it is driven by selfish mental delusions. It says here that these people are actually no different from the recipients: just as the recipients of giving are desperate to receive things, such people are also hoping and desperately seeking returns for their giving. This is because their giving is not based on any sense of care, love and compassion for others, but on their expectation of receiving rewards.

Here we learn about the meaning of giving, the motivation for giving, the mental focus in giving and the recipients of giving. We need to remember all these to make our practice of giving more effective.

Hence, you remain committed out of compassion to giving to those who ask, refers to the Buddha's deeds of giving in the past which were completely and wholeheartedly motivated by love and compassion for other beings.

(b') What kind of motivation must be eliminated

1. *A motivation that believes in the supremacy of bad views.* Lacking this means that you do not give while

thinking, "There is no result from generosity," "Harmful blood offerings are religious," "I am giving as I apply myself to what is good and beneficial," or "Through just the completion of generosity alone I will be free of mundane and supramundane attachments."

This clearly implies that we should eliminate any wrong views as the supreme view concerning the practice of giving, such as no result from generosity and the ritual of animal sacrifice etc.

2. *A motivation that is arrogant.* Lacking this means that you do not despise the person who asks for something, you do not compete with others, and, after you give something, you do not conceitedly think, "I am so generous; no one else can do like this."

This reminds us that when giving we should never despise or look down upon the recipients but give sincerely and respectfully. This is very important. As mentioned earlier, you should give out of sincere love and compassion for the recipients, not out of an intention to compete with other givers by thinking 'I am also giving because they are giving.' *And, after you give something, you do not conceitedly think, "I am so generous" as that inflates your mind with the pride that 'I am a very generous person.'*

The text continues:

The *Purification of the Obscurations of Karma Sūtra* (*Karmāvaraṇa-viśuddhi-sūtra*) explains that when ordinary beings make gifts, they lose faith in those who are stingy, on account of which they get angry and are reborn in a hell, so it is said that this obstructs generosity. When these ordinary persons observe ethical discipline, they speak unflatteringly of those whose ethical discipline is faulty, so they lose faith in many living beings and fall into miserable realms on account of their loss of faith; and when these ordinary people maintain patience and the like, they speak disparagingly of those who do the opposite of these, and so obstruct their own ethical discipline and so forth.

Hence you should do as the *Praise of Infinite Qualities* says:

At the times when you were learned and very intelligent you did not praise yourself;
You extolled and revered other persons who had few good qualities.
When you maintained a mass of good qualities, you seized on even a small fault in your own behavior.

When it says *you seized on even a small fault in your own behaviour* it means that the more qualities you develop, the fewer the faults you have. Remember this. You may think you have been developing qualities - but this is not necessarily the case. It clarifies here that the sign of developing qualities is the decreasing of faults in our personalities. (The word 'quality' in Tibetan is *yonten* and the word for fault is *rkyon*.) So, if you keep developing qualities, eventually you won't have even minor faults. It is also said here that you should abandon self-praise, i.e. speaking highly of your own qualities. However, you should develop the habit of praising others for their qualities; not belittling or looking down upon them.

The third attribute:

3. *A motivation for support.* Lacking this means that you do not give with the hope of getting praise or fame.

It is wrong to engage in the practice of giving to gain fame and reputation.

4. *A motivation of discouragement.* Lacking this means that when you give after becoming joyful even before the act of giving, ...

This advises that even before beginning an act of giving, you should feel greatly excited and motivated. Furthermore, merely seeing the recipients should bring an involuntary sense of joy and delight to your mind. And then the text says:

... you are filled with faith ...

While actually engaged in the practice of giving, you should have great faith and a positive attitude towards your practice.

and then have no regret after giving;

And after finishing the practice of giving, you should only feel delight and joy, and never regret or have negativity toward the practice. The text continues:

and even when you hear about a bodhisattva's vast acts of generosity, you are not discouraged but intensify your enthusiasm without belittling yourself.

This highlights that as a result of hearing how bodhisattvas so extensively, selflessly and timelessly engage in the deeds of generosity, you should not feel discouraged or that you can't do the same - 'I am not good enough, I am not strong enough.' Saying these things to yourself is like belittling or despising yourself, which we are advised here to abandon. Rather, you should feel admiration for and be inspired by the bodhisattvas' deeds, as well as in the virtues of any other beings. You should learn to always rejoice in the virtues and merits created by others.

Then the fifth:

5. *A motivation in which you turn your back on someone.*

This is a literal translation. The text continues:

Lacking this means that you give out of an even-minded compassion that is impartial toward enemy, friend, and ordinary persons.

When it comes to the practice of giving, you should never discriminate between other beings on the basis of whether or not they are your friends, enemies, or strangers. You should give to all beings without bias or discrimination. If your mental attitude is biased, you are excluding some beings and turning your back on them.

The sixth:

6. *A motivation of expecting something in return.* Lacking this means that you do not give to others out of the hope that they will help you, ...

This means that your act of giving is conditional upon the recipient doing something like a favour in return. This must be avoided.

... but because you see that these beings are bereft of happiness, ...

Rather you should focus on the fact that *these beings are being bereft of happiness.*

... burned by the flames of craving, without the power to relieve their sufferings, and naturally miserable.

7. *A motivation of expecting fruition.* Lacking this means that you do not hope for the fruition of an excellent body and resources in future lives, but give because you see that all composite things are without substance but can contribute to unexcelled enlightenment.

This passage specifically points out that the aim of your practice of giving should not be finding a good body or

wealth and resources in future lives, because *composite things are without substance* although they *can contribute to unexcelled enlightenment*. This means they can be turned into the means of achieving complete enlightenment. As clearly mentioned below, you should not consider finding a good body (or rebirth) and resources as the final aim of practising giving.

This does not stop you from expecting these results in the short term, but stops you from taking the mere body and resources of cyclic existence to be your goal.

The text elaborates more here by raising questions and clarifying key points. His Holiness the Dalai Lama praises Je Tsongkhapa's writings because in them he elaborates on the topics which are unclear and difficult to comprehend, by raising all the doubts and providing comprehensive explanations.

The text continues:

Besides these, you should give without the motivation of wrong livelihood in which you think, "If I make this gift, the ruler, etc., will recognize me as a generous person, and I will get some respect."

This is self-explanatory.

Do not give from fear of becoming poor, ...

This is relevant because we often stop giving for fear of becoming penniless. When you are giving, there should be no fear that you will become poor as a result. The text then says:

... or with the motivation to deceive someone who asks for something.

This says that giving things with an ulterior motive such as deceiving the recipient is not on! And:

Give something when you are free from distraction and feelings of dislike or anger. Make gifts when you are not dispirited due the various wrong actions of the one who asks for something. Even when you see the faults of someone who has deceived you, etc., do not give with the motivation to proclaim these faults to others. Finally, give in the belief, from which others cannot dissuade you, that each individual act of giving will give rise to an individual result.

The text continues:

(3)) How to give

Prior to this, we have spoken about the intention of giving. Next, we'll look at the manner of the actual deeds at the time of giving.

This section has two parts:

1. How not to give

The manner which is negative is to be eliminated.

2. How to give

A manner which is positive is to be adopted.

These points are self-explanatory.

(a') How not to give

Cast aside these thirteen ways of giving because they are to be eliminated: (1) not giving right away but only after you have delayed; (2) giving under stress; (3) giving after you have involved yourself in affairs that accord neither with the teachings nor with the ways of the world; (4) making a commitment beforehand that "I will give this much" and later making a gift of reduced quality or amount; (5) giving in return for favors; (6) giving in instalments when you could give all at one time; (7) as a ruler, giving away someone

else's child or spouse that you have kidnapped; (8) taking through pressure the belongings of your parents, servants, etc. and then giving them to others; (9) making a gift by a method that will hurt someone else; (10) while you remain idle, employing someone else to do the giving;

Here it says that you accrue more merit if you give things with your own hands.

The text continues:

(11) giving while you criticize and have contempt for the one who asks for something, while you are indirectly critical in a way that implies contempt, or while you intimidate the recipient with harsh words; (12) giving while you violate the Buddha's prohibitive precepts; and, (13) not giving resources as you acquire them but giving them after you accumulate them for a long time.

Indeed, bodhisattvas see that it is wrong to give resources that you have stored up, whereas it is not wrong to give them away as you acquire them. This is because there is no additional merit in storing them up and then giving them at one time, and because you turn away many requests for your goods while you are storing them up; you come to feel tormented and may give them to someone who has not asked for them. These points stated in the *Bodhisattva Levels* are very important, for you can see that during the period of storing up the goods you produce many afflictions such as stinginess and the like, that the trouble of safeguarding them and so forth becomes a hindrance to many virtuous actions, and that more often than not you lose them at some point and are not able to give them away in the end anyway.

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Sandup Tsering
Edit 2 by or Jill Lancashire
Edited Version*

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