

1. What does practicing each of the six perfections achieve?

As we learnt in last week's teaching, we should first try to understand why it is crucial for us to find a life with the four excellences, and then understand that we can indeed find such a life by engaging in the practice of the six perfections. It is said that the perfection of moral discipline serves as the primary cause for us to achieve a happy rebirth; the practice of giving is the main cause to ensure that we have good resources; the practice of patience is the main cause to ensure good friends and companions to share and enjoy those good resources, and joyous perseverance is the cause to be able to successfully complete whatever we start.

However, it's not good enough just to find a life with the four excellences, if we waste that opportunity and it ends up as a basis for even more mental afflictions. Hence, the need to practise the last two perfections - the perfection of meditative stabilisation, which is primarily to subdue or overcome the very gross or manifest form of mental afflictions; and the practice of the perfection of wisdom, which uproots these mental afflictions.

2. What does Geshe Doga frequently tell people to cultivate each morning when you get up?

On a day-to-day basis, we should remind ourselves about our spiritual practice. I frequently tell people who I meet casually or in my Dharma talks that each morning when you get up, you should try to cultivate the positive thought: **I will only do actions that benefit others and at any cost, I will not do any actions that will harm them.** You will find that cultivating such a positive state of mind is like the dawning of the sun dispelling the darkness of ignorance and confusion in your mind. It will make a huge difference to your experiences over the whole day. Whereas if you start the day with your mind filled with distractions and negative thoughts, then for the whole day you may experience a very confused and bewildered mind. Therefore, it is very beneficial to just to say to yourself every morning that 'benefitting other beings and not causing harm to them is my most important task.'

His Holiness the Dalai Lama says that to remember the qualities of the Three Jewels, he recites this passage by Nagarjuna from *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way* every morning, 'I prostrate to Gautama, who through compassion taught the true doctrine, which leads to the relinquishing of all views.' He follows this by saying, 'please grant me blessings.' It is essential to do this mind training practice on an everyday basis, in order to develop a positive habit and to habituate our minds to positive thoughts.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama also usually recites the same homage to the Lord Buddha before giving any Dharma teachings which His Holiness says is also a practice of one of his very important gurus, Khunu Lama Rinpoche. Likewise, I encourage you to think of benefitting other beings and not causing any harm to them every morning, as soon as you arise from your bed.

3. Talk about the opposites to the six perfections and what is gained from not engaging in them.

The Lord Buddha said that initially you please and attract other sentient beings through your practice of giving. This advice is very true; it is a very effective way of benefiting other beings. Initially, through your practice of giving, you please them by alleviating their poverty or fulfilling their immediate needs. This will greatly please them and they will become closer to you as if you have won their heart. Giving makes our resources or possessions a good cause for benefiting other beings, and in this way giving us a sense of fulfilment and accomplishment.

The opposite of giving is stinginess or miserliness, where let alone utilising our wealth and possession to benefit others, we even worry about utilising it for our own good. What point is there in being wealthy if we are stingy? The only good thing of having a stingy mind is accumulating material wealth *per se*.

The opposite of the practice of the perfection of moral discipline is immoral acts. More specifically the opposite of the moral act of refraining from killing is the act of killing, the opposite of refraining from stealing is stealing

and so on. You can see that how relevant it is for us to safeguard ourselves against all these immoral acts in order to secure our happiness and reduce suffering even in this present life.

The opposite of patience is hatred or anger, and we know how destructive and damaging that is to others and to our own lives.

The opposite of joyous perseverance or effort is laziness - let alone achieving our long-term goals we cannot even achieve short-term goals. The Lord Buddha said, 'If only you have effort you have all the Dharma, but if you have only laziness you do not have any Dharma.'

Similarly, the opposite of the meditative stabilisation or concentration is distraction. We know how it is important for us to have a calm and focussed mind if we are to be at peace and for our actions to be effective.

The opposite of wisdom is wrong or mistaken views which is a cause of a lot of confusion and ignorance, and as a result, bring a lot of suffering. We can talk about wrong view in terms of the ultimate nature of things or in terms of knowledge of other truths such as impermanence. Therefore, the opposite of wisdom is really an ignorance with respect to the various types of knowledge.

4. 'It is very important to understand the finer points, and also to see how the contents are inter-woven together.' Describe how the six perfections are interwoven.

I encourage everyone to read the text and reflect on its meaning as you read. It is very important to understand the finer points, and also to see how the contents are inter-woven together, such as the linkage between the practice of giving being followed immediately by the practice of moral discipline. Then the text says:

Then you do no harm to any living being...

We understand here that the practice of giving is done in conjunction with the practice of moral discipline, which makes a sense. Otherwise, our actions may be at odds with each other: on the one hand you give and on the other hand, you cause harm. This doesn't make sense, does it? Therefore when you practise giving, you should work towards practising moral discipline.

This part of the text can be taken to refer to the necessity of the practice of **morality** in order to ensure that giving is wholeheartedly to benefit others and that there is no self-interest and exploitation of other beings whatsoever. You don't want the giving to be like someone feeding a pig for its meat. Then the text continues:

... in addition, are patient with harm done to you.

In addition, we need to engage in the practice of **patience**, particularly patience with the *harm* we receive from others. Without the practice of patience, we retaliate when others harm us and such harmful actions are against our ethical practice and principle of refraining from harmful actions.

Then it continues:

Without becoming dispirited you joyously persevere at helping those who harm you. You depend on meditative stabilization and inspire them through displaying supernormal powers and so forth.

As it says here, in addition to the practice of the first three perfections, we need to rely on the practice of **joyous perseverance** in order to be able to benefit those who harm us, as well as being able to cultivate and develop the practice of the perfections of **meditative stabilisation** and **wisdom**. The text is saying that through developing meditative stabilisation such as the state of calm abiding, we can achieve actual concentration (Tib: *bSam.ten dNgos.shi*) and then the various clairvoyant powers (Tib: *mNgon.shes*). By utilising the clairvoyant powers of higher perception, we can then benefit other beings more effectively and to a greater extent. Then it says:

When they become suitable vessels for the teachings,...

When other beings have cultivated an aspiration for and admiration and faith in the Dharma, or when they become suitable vessels for receiving Dharma, you teach them Dharma and lead them to the state of liberation. The text then says:

... you rely on wisdom and give good explanations, cut through their doubts and thereby bring them to liberation. Because you do all this, the perfections are fixed as six in number.

