



Nalandabodhi Connecticut
Paramita of the Month Newsletter



"For morality, nothing to do,
Other than stop being dishonest."
-Milarepa, The Song of the Six Perfections

Volume 3 Number 2

The Kagyu tradition divides the perfection of morality into three aspects: renouncing evil actions, accumulating virtuous actions, and benefiting all beings. Of course, in order to be of benefit to other beings we must first clean out our own dirt. We have to be completely honest with ourselves. Renouncing evil actions, or embracing virtuous action, is not perfect unless our true reason for engaging in such activity is the benefit of others.

We must be very honest with ourselves when evaluating the motivations for our actions. If we are engaging in activities out of a desire for personal gain, fame, or praise, then we are not engaging in perfect morality. Avoiding negative behaviors in hopes that others will like us and that we will become more popular is not perfect morality. Engaging in virtuous conduct in hopes of advancing our views, gaining the trust of another, or achieving personal gain is not perfect morality. It is easy to delude ourselves about the motivations for our actions. It is only through complete honesty in the examination of our motives that we can begin to develop perfect morality.

Perfect morality is based upon the benefit of all living beings. It is not based on self-centered notions. If there is any notion of self associated with a particular action then that action could not be judged as perfectly moral. It is not the actions themselves, but the motivation behind the actions that determines their moral impact. If our motivation is based upon a notion of self then the action, though good and beneficial, could still be non-virtuous. If the action is motivated by a genuine intention to benefit all beings and is free of any reference to self then that action is virtuous. We should always think that what we are doing is for the benefit of others, not ourselves.

Changing the fundamental motivation of our daily actions, from self-centered to other-centered, is important when practicing any of the paramitas. It is especially important when we discuss abandoning unvirtuous actions and practicing virtuous ones. As Milarepa stated, to practice the perfection of morality there is really nothing more to do than be honest with ourselves about what motivates our actions. Through combining honest evaluation of our motivations with the aspiration to benefit all beings we can bring the practice of the perfection of morality to fruition.

The following quote, though originating in the Bhagavad Gita, seems an apropos closure:

"You have the right to work, but never to the fruit of the work.
You should never engage in action for the sake of reward,
nor should you long for inaction."

Bhagavad Gita 2:47

May all beings benefit.

The information presented in this newsletter is based upon a teaching given by Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche in June 1984 at

KTD Monastery in Woodstock, New York as presented in the text "[Transforming Mental Afflictions and Other Selected Teachings](#)" available from [Namse Bangdzo Bookstore](#).

A complete translation of Milarepa's Song on the Six Perfections translated by Ken McLeod is available [here](#)