



Nalandabodhi Connecticut

Paramita of the Month Newsletter



"The unwise man, lacking understanding,
Behaves as if he were his own worst enemy,
Committing evil deeds that produce bitter fruit."

- *Dhammapada*, 5:7

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The paramita of moral discipline is sometimes also referred to as the paramita of skillful conduct. This alludes to the fact that proper moral discipline requires mindfulness of our conduct. We should at all times be mindful of the fruits of our actions.

Tai Situpa Rinpoche describes this paramita as having three main aspects, similar to the paramita of generosity discussed last month. The three aspects of the paramita of skillful conduct are: refraining from negative actions, accumulating merit, and helping others. Refraining from negative actions mean refraining from doing harm to others, especially from: killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, slander, harsh or useless speech, covetousness, ill will, and misguided beliefs. Motivation is the crucial factor that determines the moral quality of our actions. It is not just the action itself that is negative or positive, but the mental state that underlies it. Being mindful and skillful in our conduct requires that we carefully examine the motivations that underlie our actions. When we act out of desire to benefit others, without any thought of personal gain, these actions are beneficial. Actions motivated by selfish desire or the desire to harm others are negative. Tai Situpa Rinpoche suggests that to truly develop pure moral discipline we must study and learn which things are negative by training under the guidance of someone who has experience of their significance.

In addition to avoiding actions that bring harm to others (or ourselves) we should seek to accumulate merit for the good of all. Whatever is beneficial should be practiced. But more importantly, we need to develop a sense of being ready to act. We should develop a willingness to engage in whatever meritorious opportunities present themselves to us. Tai Situpa Rinpoche tells us that merely developing this eagerness, this willingness to act on opportunities to generate merit, is in itself a meritorious act.

The final aspect of the paramita of skillful conduct is to actively engage in benefiting others. To be truly pure in nature our actions need to be completely altruistic. However, even if we have not developed a level of realization that allows us to always act unmistakably, we can begin to train ourselves to act in ways that benefit others. To help us develop the conviction to act in ways that are beneficial to others, Tai Situpa Rinpoche suggests that we follow four guidelines:

- Provide others with what they need, provided that such action will not bring harm to them or others.
- Say that which accords with the wishes of others, provided that what we say does not bring harm. Avoid harsh words unless they are absolutely necessary for the benefit of others.
- If in any way we can provide others with even the smallest glimpse of truth, then we must do it.
- Act in accordance with accepted norms and customs in all situations where it will not bring harm.

Until we have achieved the realizations of the bodhisattva bhūmis our ability to truly help others will always be limited. With the aspiration to achieve the wisdom of a bodhisattva we can begin to train our minds to avoid negative actions, engage in meritorious activities, and be of benefit to others. Tia Situpa Rinpoche advises that we start where we are and continue to develop wisdom and skillfulness until we can do all that needs to be done.

May all beings benefit.

The information presented in this newsletter is based upon a teachings by Tai Situpa Rinpoche presented in the book "Way to Go." This text is out of print but excerpts related to The Six Perfections can be downloaded at the [Samye Ling](#) website.