



Nalandabodhi Connecticut
Paramita of the Month Newsletter



"When a person has lived properly and acted generously, he grasps the way things are.
He is not dependent on attachments; he is free from anger and aversions;
what he does becomes perfect action."
-Sutta Nipata

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This month's paramita newsletter beings a new series of teachings that extends upon those in the previous volume by examining teachings presented by Khenpo Ngawang Pelzang in his commentary on *Words of My Perfect Teacher*. This first installment focuses on the paramita of generosity. Khenpo begins by explaining that as "beginner Bodhisattvas" we should train again and again in our attitude. Always being mindful, no matter what we are doing, of never straying from generosity, or whatever perfection we may be training in.

He further explains that Bodhisattvas from the first through tenth levels must train in the perfections mainly in deed rather than in mental attitude. However, for beginners, the view is of paramount importance. The reason it is so necessary is that our grasping at "me" and "mine" is what has kept us locked in samsaric existence. Analytic meditation is described as a very powerful antidote to this grasping. Examining whether the self is the same as or different from the aggregates we come to understand that our sense of being an individual has no basis. Ultimately we arrive at the conclusion that the aggregates themselves have no intrinsic existence and we realize the selflessness of all phenomena. Practicing the perfection of generosity in deed also helps us to sever our grasping at "me" and "mine" and is also a very powerful antidote to the ignorance that keeps us bound in samsara.

Khenpo provides several pieces of guidance on how to proceed with our practice of the perfection of generosity in deed. First, he tells us to give as much as we are able starting with small gifts. In this way we gradually increase our ability to give until we are able to "give our own heads, arms, or legs." For the main meditation practice Khenpo suggests that we meditate on the attitude of giving freely. We consider that there are three categories of things to be given: our body, our possessions, and whatever merit we now possess as well as those accumulated in the past, present, and future. Begin by recalling the kindness that all sentient beings have shown you in innumerable past lives and kindle the desire to repay that kindness. Think "I gather together my present body, all my possessions, and merits I shall have until I attain ultimate Buddhahood" and think that you hand all this over to all sentient beings to help them achieve temporary happiness and ultimate bliss, and to remove all their suffering. To summarize:

To whom do you give? To all sentient beings.

What do you give? Your bodies, possessions, and merits.

Why do you give? So that they may attain temporary happiness, be free of suffering, and ultimately achieve Buddhahood

All of this should be done without expecting anything in return in this life or any results that might ripen in your future lives. We should aspire that our connections with others be meaningful no matter how poorly they may treat us. Khenpo explains that this is the way to practice the perfection of generosity during our meditation sessions.

He further describes the practice of the perfection of generosity in deed, and explains that it has two aspects: offering and giving. Giving refers to the act of material giving to other sentient beings. Khenpo explains that great joy should arise in us when we see another being in need. We should be happy for the opportunity to practice generosity. Should stinginess well up in us, you should remind yourself of its drawbacks:

*"The miserly are reborn in the realm of the pretas;
Even if born among humans they are paupers."*

In this way the act of material giving to others becomes an antidote for stinginess. You should always give the best of what you have, to give only that which you do not care for or want is explained by Khenpo to be breaking the discipline of generosity.

Offering refers to the act of making offerings to the three jewels. Here we should recall that no matter what we offer, the act of offering must include proper preparation of the offering, a proper act of offering, and proper dedication of the merit of offering. During the act of offering we should arrive at certainty that although the giver, receiver, and gift all appear, that they are empty and devoid of intrinsic existence. You must make the offering without expecting anything in return, not even a karmic reward in this or future lives. Then dedicating the merit to all beings, with your heart full of compassion, take your leave.

Khenpo closes by describing ordinary giving to other sentient beings without any expectation of benefit for oneself as belonging to the path of accumulation, great giving to the path of joining, and exceptionally great giving to the path of seeing. As beginners he advises that while we may practice giving our body mentally, in deed we should take care of it. He advises us to give as much of our possessions as we can and to give all of our merits and their results completely for the benefit of beings.

May all beings benefit!

The information presented in this newsletter is based upon teachings presented by Khenpo Ngawang Pelzang presented in the text "[A Guide to The Words of My Perfect Teacher](#)." This text is available through [Namse Bangdzo Bookstore](#).



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