



## Nalandabodhi Connecticut Paramita of the Month Newsletter



"By doing evil one defiles oneself;  
by avoiding evil one purifies oneself.  
Purity and impurity depend upon oneself:  
no one can purify another."  
-Dhammapada 165

Volume 6 Number 2

For August we continue our examination of Khenpo Ngawang Pelzang's teaching on the perfections as presented in "A Guide to the Words of My Perfect Teacher." This month we examine the perfection of moral discipline. Khenpo begins by advising us that discipline is to be practiced at all times, with no distinctions between breaks and sessions. He states that the perfection of discipline is said to be "a continuous attitude of giving up negative actions together with its seed." According to Khenpo whether or not we have discipline depends not on simply giving up the ten negative actions, but on maintaining an attitude of avoidance in our minds. It is important to develop this attitude of avoidance in our minds along with the steadfast promise not to give up this attitude.

In refraining from engaging in negative actions our motivation should be to benefit all other sentient beings. Recognizing the immense suffering that all beings endure, and the kindness they have undoubtedly shown us in previous lives, we should develop the desire that all beings attain perfect buddhahood. In order to realize this aspiration we then commit ourselves to refraining from negative actions. Khenpo suggests that we make the following promises during our meditation sessions:

*I'd rather die than take the life of a single sentient being or induce another person to kill.*

*Even if I am dying of starvation I shall never take what has not been given. I shall never make someone else steal nor rejoice when others steal.*

*I shall never indulge in impure conduct.*

*From now on I'd rather cut my tongue out than tell a lie or encourage others to lie.*

*I'd rather die than let my devisive words make two friends fall out.*

*Even if my heart were torn still beating from my body, I would rather die than foster covetous thoughts about other peoples things.*

*I'd rather die than think of harming beings, treating them violently, or*

*harboring evil intentions.*

*I'd rather die than have wrong views concerning the true teachings of the Buddha.*

*Even if my life is at stake, I swear I shall not go back on these pledges.*

It is this last pledge, the promise not to give up these vows, that Khenpo explains as the true practice of discipline, not the avoidance in and of itself. Having made these pledges one should arrive at the conviction that while discipline must be kept in this way, the vow, the one keeping it, and the benefit of keeping it all lack intrinsic existence. Between our sessions Khenpo advises us to practice the three forms of transcendent discipline: avoiding negative actions, undertaking positive actions, and bringing benefit to others.

Vows related to moral discipline can be categorized into three levels: pratimoksha, Bodhisattva, and Vajrayana. These can be summarized as follows: the pratimoksha is to refrain from harming others and the underlying wish to harm, the Bodhisattva is to bring about the benefit of others and the underlying wish to benefit them, and the Vajrayana is to regard body, speech, and mind as the three vajras.

While "undertaking positive actions" can be viewed as the practice of the six perfections itself, Khenpo advises that as beginners we simply make every effort to do even the smallest positive actions of body speech and mind. The point at which we can truly bring benefit to others is when we have realized the truth of dharmata on the path of seeing. Until then, he advises that we refrain from the ten negative actions<sup>1</sup>, help others, and develop the attitude of doing so while regarding our body, speech, and mind as the three vajras.

*May all beings benefit!*

<sup>1</sup>The ten negative actions are: killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, sowing discord, using harsh words, engaging in worthless chatter, covetousness, wishing harm to others, and accepting wrong views.

---

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](#).



Prepared for [Nalandabodhi Connecticut](#) | [Newsletter Archive](#)