



## Nalandabodhi Connecticut Paramita of the Month Newsletter



"Wisdom springs from meditation;  
Without meditation wisdom wanes.  
Having known these two paths of progress  
and decline,  
Let a man so conduct himself that his  
wisdom may increase."  
-Dhammapada 20:282

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In his final discourse on the paramitas Khenpo Ngawang Pelzang addresses the paramita of wisdom. He describes this perfection as the perfect discrimination of phenomena, i.e. recognizing what is ultimately true and what is not. The basis for classification is anything that can be known, and this is then classified into two categories: the relative and absolute truths.

The relative, or all-concealing, truth is that which appears as true to the deluded minds of ordinary people. It is the infallible truth of cause and effect, the illusory nature of all phenomena. In short relative truth is described as anything that can be an object of mind, that can be expressed in speech, or that can be undertaken as a physical action. All of these dharmas are explained to be the product of the dispositions of the deluded or mistaken mind. While they appear vividly they do not exist as real objects.

Absolute truth is explained to be the undeceiving true nature of all phenomena. It transcends the mind and is described as inexpressible and inconceivable. It cannot be known by conceptual mind. It is seen by self-cognizing wisdom that is free of subject and object. Chandrakirti states "not seeing is the great seeing, not beholding is the great beholding." He explains it as a mind that is unproduced reflecting the form of an object that is unproduced, a mind free of all concepts. The "seeing" here is free of any conceptual characteristics whatsoever. It is described in various ways by different Buddhist philosophical traditions, but the absence of subject-object duality is common to the view of the ultimate.

As for the practice of the perfection of wisdom, Khenpo describes the practice of meditation that leads to a recognition of the ultimate truth. He explains that we should divide our time between sessions and breaks. During sessions we meditate on the no-self of both the individual and the no-self of phenomena. To do this we first have to be clear about what we are refuting, which is the nature as it appears to us.

First we can examine the way the self appears to us from moment to moment. The way we apprehend the self varies from moment to moment. When we cling to the personal self we cling to something we imagine as permanent, single, and independent. Investigating in this way we find that while the aggregates are

impermanent the self is not seen in this way. Thus the self and the aggregates cannot be the same. However, we are also unable to observe the self in the absence of the aggregates. Thus we are forced to conclude that there is no basis for a truly existent self. It is a projection of the mind based upon our dispositions.

Next we examine the things that we perceive to be outside. We generally perceive these things to be single and whole. But upon analysis we find this not to be true. When we analyze external objects we find them to be composed of parts. No matter how far we analyze we find no truly existent thing. This is what Khenpo explains as the meaning of the phrase "form is emptiness." These objects to which we cling are again projections of the mind due to dispositions. They have no true existence. When we fail to analyze we take objects to be real, we perceive form to be real. When we analyze we arrive at the conviction that emptiness and interdependence are indistinguishable from one another and are mutually inclusive. The fact that appearances arise endlessly out of emptiness is what Khenpo explains as the meaning of the phrase "emptiness is form." Khenpo instructs us to meditate on this until a definite conviction in the statement "form is emptiness, emptiness is form" dawns within us.

Finally, these same analyses can be applied to our own minds. While we take the mind to be permanent, single, and independent, if we analyze we find that this is not the case. The mind depends on its objects for existence. The mind and objects arise interdependently. If we examine our thoughts we find that they arise and cease continuously. They do not have the characteristics of permanence and independence that we ascribe to the mind. Khenpo Ngawang Pelzang instructs us to carefully examine how the mind comes, stays, and goes. Such investigation may lead one to believe the mind is nonexistent, but never the less thoughts and feelings arise, so you might argue that based on this mind exists. The mind appears due to dispositions and interdependence. It never truly arose, does not abide, and thus never ceases either. Left unanalyzed mind does indeed appear out of emptiness. It possesses the same illusory nature as all phenomena. It is in this way that mind is said to be empty. According to Khenpo:

"Like the moon and its reflection in water, emptiness and interdependence cannot be dissociated. Emptiness is no other than mind, mind is no other than emptiness."

Khenpo closes by stating that through such investigations we will develop an unshakable realization of the unity of all of these emptinesses, one that can never be taken from us. We should reach the conviction that the nature of all phenomena is that of illusion. It is through the work of the magician of ignorance and dispositions that there arise all of the various perceptions of the six realms. Khenpo urges us to meditate on this again and again, alternating between analytic and resting meditation. Between sessions he instructs that we should study the different categories of wisdom, reflect on them carefully, and bring them to mind as frequently as we can during our mundane pursuits. In this way we will surely realize the perfection of wisdom.

*May all beings benefit!*

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