

Module XV – The Six Paramitas

The text for the course is Volume Two of *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma – The Bodhisattva Path of Wisdom and Compassion* by Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, ISBN 978-I-59030-804-2.

The reading for Module XV is Part Six: Bodhisattva Activity, pp 193-269.

The Six Paramitas in traditional order are: (Names are in English and Sanskrit.)

Transcendent Generosity	Dana Paramita	(Tibetan and Pali
Transcendent Discipline	Shila Paramita	languages are also used.)
Transcendent Patience	Kshanti Paramita	
Transcendent Effort	Virya Paramita	
Transcendent Meditation	Dhyana Paramita	
Transcendent Knowledge	Prajna Paramita	

The Paramitas are the Skillful Actions necessary to follow the Bodhisattva Path. Wisdom and Compassion are both needed to follow the Bodhisattva Path, and the Paramitas belong more to the Compassion aspect of the path. When the Bodhisattva Path is described as being Profound and Vast, they are an aspect of Vast Activity. Taken together, Profound Wisdom and Vast Compassion or Activity constitute the entire Mahayana, also called the Bodhisattva Path.

The Mahayana (Great Vehicle) is the Vehicle of relating to others and their suffering. It is grounded in some understanding of the Hinayana (Small Vehicle) which starts with the motive to relieve one's own suffering. One aspect of the Hinayana training is to stabilize the mind by being able to sit in meditation posture and hold one's seat. If we are unwilling to meditate at all, it is difficult to understand Buddhist teachings.

Talk 1 on September 8, 2016 is an Introduction to the Paramitas (pp. 193-205) and the First Paramita, Transcendent Generosity (pp. 206-213).

The following outline follows the text more than my own comments in class:

Chapter 25: Techniques of Nongrasping

The Mahayana or Bodhisattva Path is an intermediate process to develop enlightenment. We start with Hinayana or individual salvation and go beyond that to an understanding of emptiness (shunyata) and compassion. The paramita practice is how we apply these teachings very directly and personally.

When we experience a spark of goodness, we may have an attack of negativity. But that is a useful reference to recognize our goodness. But we don't just have goodness, we have to *exercise* goodness. Before taking the Bodhisattva Vow, we must have the conviction that it is necessary to do this.

The technique for becoming a good practitioner is to follow the six transcendent disciplines. With generosity we open ourselves and give away everything including ourselves. The rest of the paramitas follow naturally from that. If we are doing good works (e.g. volunteer work) we need a much deeper understanding of our own ego investment in the work we are doing.

Paramita is a Sanskrit word meaning *going beyond* or arriving at the other shore. It means going beyond mental gossip; going beyond passion, aggression and ignorance.

Paramita practice transcends both the simple, ordinary pain of *samsara* (living in continuously recycled pain) and the notion of peaceful attainment or *nirvana*. In our tradition, one does not need to be highly realized to take the Bodhisattva Vow. All that is required is enough of a spark of insight to see that there really is no alternative, so one just does it.

Paramita practice has four characteristics (i) overcoming neurotic hang-ups and defilements, (ii) understanding the threefold purity of no actor, no action and no object of the action, (iii) actions are fulfilled completely and precisely, and (iv) actions have benefitted others.

In paramita practice, *trying* is problematic. There will be obstacles and problems but we keep doing it. Our intention is secondary. We can practice saying “yes,” and noticing how our mind has second thoughts.

We sit like a Buddha even if we do not feel like a Buddha.

Chapter 26: Applying Emptiness in Daily Life

If we are not shown how to apply shunyata we will not be able to practice good generosity, etc.

Three supreme disciplines of shila, Samadhi and prajna.

Shila comprises the first three paramitas. We work on them in daily life situations.

Samadhi contains the fifth paramita. We understand the nature of temptation and the fickleness of state of mind and do not give into them.

Prajna contains the sixth paramita. Great luminosity and great compassion. Learning is important. Bodhisattvas should not be clumsy, stupid or uneducated.

The fourth paramita is not mentioned here, but the path is permeated with exertion which has become pleasurable.

Chapter 27: Generosity

Paramita practice begins with generosity. Generosity is giving. (Words like donation in English are related to *dana*.) Opening ourselves up, having the strength to work with others. Letting others have joy and not holding back. Giving up stinginess and not holding onto psychological possessiveness.

Generosity and Nonattachment

The nature of generosity is nonattachment. Having the personal intelligence and vision that everything is not constantly dependent on what we want. How about the rest of the world? In some cases “I” should come last. That “I” is like a sore thumb and always embarrassing and painful.

Overcoming Poverty Mentality

Being willing to part with anything precious that we want to hold onto – resources and ammunition to attack the next problem. Parting with what is precious and giving what is precious. Giving our basic state of being or mindfulness.

The best donation is to extend our beauty, smiles and loving-kindness to others. Respecting others is very important.

Generosity is considered unshakable. Generosity is based on feeling ourselves to be wealthy and rich. But generosity does not mean losing everything and becoming a slave of others. We are not giving away our shareholdings, but our profits.

Three Levels of Generosity

Material Generosity: Giving clothing food, clothing, etc. This is very subtle. We have to find out about the receiver and not act on impulse. Is that person ready for our gift? What we give does not have to be expensive, but it can be inspiring in its elegance.

The Gift of Fearlessness: People have to learn fearlessness so that they can help themselves, rather than coming back to us for more food.

When we have developed dedication to others and passionlessness, we are no longer afraid. We can afford to be arrogant in the positive sense. If people need security we can give them fearlessness.

The Gift of Dharma: We can present dharma at a very basic level so that it does not panic anybody.

Rehearsing the Dharma

Giving comes first, and from that a sense of vision and richness arises. Practice extending the arm and pulling back and giving again.

But we also have to be careful about the object of our generosity. We should not be generous to the wrong cause.

To begin, everything is a rehearsal. But the more we give, the more we are inspired to give – and the gaining process happens naturally and automatically.