



The Way of the Bodhisattva Practice and Study Group

Class Three: March 7, 2024

The Perfection of Discipline (*sila-paramita*)

❖ Study and Reflection

Shantideva: chapter 2 (Confession), chapter 4 (Carefulness), chapter 5 (Vigilance)

Gampopa: chapter 13

❖ Meditation: Calmly Abiding and Clearly Seeing the *kleshas* that lead to undisciplined behavior

Step 1. Sit for a few minutes resting attention in the breathing body. Then:

Step 2. Bring to mind a pattern of mental, verbal, or physical behavior that causes difficulty in your life. It could be something you don't intend to do, but find yourself repeatedly doing. Or it might be something you keep intending to do, but haven't been able to accomplish.

Step 3. Push on the behavior by imagining behaving differently, and observe the arising of reactions in you. Open to sensations, perceptions, feelings, stories, and impulses.

- *How does it feel in the body?*
- *How does it feel emotionally?*
- *What stories does it tell? What demands does it make?*
- *How does it arise? How does it subside?*

Step 4. Breathe into the experience of the reaction. Use meditative stability and clarity to directly experience how reactive patterns operate.

The conceptual mind tries to analyze and manage emotional reactions, but again and again simply rest attention in the experience of the reaction itself. As you cultivate a capacity to do that, you'll see more clearly the actual nature of the reaction, and know how unintended behaviors are deeply rooted in the confusion and energy of the *kleshas*. Stability and insight are essential for wisdom to perfect the other *paramitas*.

Step 5. To end the session, drop all effort and rest in open awareness for a few minutes. Then dedicate the effort and virtue of your practice to the genuine benefit of all beings.

❖ The Four Opponent Powers

<p style="text-align: center;">REGRET / REMORSE / RECOGNITION</p> <p>Recognize and regret unwholesome acts of body, speech, and mind as mistakes, as you would regret accidentally drinking poison. Negative acts arise from the <i>kleshas</i> (confusion, hatred, greed, jealousy, pride).</p> <p>Acknowledge and understand harm done without getting carried away. Understand karma: positive acts bring happiness; negative bring unhappiness; intention opens the possibility of change.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">RESOLVE / RENEW / DETERMINATION</p> <p>Disidentify with negative acts compelled by the confusion of disturbing emotions (<i>kleshas</i>). Renounce and repudiate any defense or justification of negative acts. Aspire and vow not to commit unwholesome acts again.</p> <p>Commit completely to bringing goodness, merit, and positive acts into every area of life. Take joy in virtue.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">RELIANCE / SUPPORT / REFUGE</p> <p>Reestablish your intention and direction. Renew your connection to practice. Take refuge in the Three Jewels. Do not lose <i>bodhicitta</i>, the intention to awaken in order to help all beings.</p> <p>Wisdom can discriminate between negative and positive actions. Trust in and rely on awareness and compassion to purify actions and influence how actions evolve into experience.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">REMEDY / ANTIDOTE / POSITIVE ACTION</p> <p>Mitigate and counteract negative actions with positive actions. Engage in specific practices that disrupt and replace habitual negative actions. (See traditional lists below).</p> <p>Motivated by <i>bodhicitta</i>, the bodhisattva's practices include generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, meditation, and wisdom.</p> <p>Take joy in practice.</p>

Transcendent discipline (*sila-paramita*) is only perfected by regret, renewal, and wisdom. But once you have firmly aspired to awaken for the sake of all beings, and have watered the seed of *bodhicitta* and engaged in the bodhisattva training, you cannot "fail." You can and will get off track and wander about for a short or long while. But you will always be brought back again by the internal compass of Buddha-nature -- just as we are always brought back to awareness no matter how distracted we may become.

❖ **The Seven Branch Prayer counteracts specific *kleshas* (afflictions)**

1. *Homage* counteracts *pride*.
2. *Offering* counteracts *greed*.
3. *Confession* counteracts *hate*.
4. *Rejoicing* counteracts *jealousy*.
5. *Requesting* the turning of the Dharma Wheel counteracts *ignorance*.
6. *Beseeking* teachers to remain in the world and continue teaching counteracts *wrong views* such as a belief in permanence.
7. *Dedication* of merit (generating goodness) counteracts *doubt*.

Ten Unwholesome Actions	Ten Wholesome Actions
Killing	Protecting life
Stealing	Generosity
Sexual misconduct	Discipline
Lying	Truthfulness
Harsh speech	Gentle speech
Divisive speech	Reconciling speech
Idle chatter	Intentional, meaningful speech
Hatred (malice, ill-will)	Loving-kindness and benefiting others
Greed (coveting, grasping)	Generosity
Wrong view (ignorance and delusion)	Right view (seeing things as they are)

Ten acts: three of body, four of speech, three of mind.

We should avoid even the smallest negative actions, and we should perform even the most insignificant positive actions, without underestimating their value.

~ Dalai Lama, *A Flash of Lightning in the Dark of Night*, p.3

❖ The All-Encompassing and the Specific Counterforces

From *Samsara, Nirvana, & Buddha Nature*, by the Dalai Lama and Thubten Chodron:

"There are two types of counterforces. One is the all-encompassing counterforce that counteracts all afflictions. The other consists of counterforces that are specific to each affliction. The wisdom realizing emptiness is the all-encompassing counterforce that eradicates all afflictions. It directly opposes the ignorance grasping inherent existence, which is the root of afflictions... Other counterforces do not have the ability to eliminate ignorance but are applied to individual afflictions. Since cultivating wisdom realizing emptiness requires much time, we must learn and apply these more limited antidotes in the meantime to prevent our afflictions from getting out of hand. Some antidotes to cultivate:

- To counteract attachment, clinging, and greed, reflect on the impermanence of whatever person or object you are attached to. Contemplating the unattractive aspects of the person or object also works well.
- When you crave for existence in samsara, contemplate the disadvantages of samsara. This powerful antidote will redirect our aspiration to liberation.
- To pacify anger and vengeance, cultivate fortitude.
- To remedy hatred, hostility, resentment, and so forth, meditate on loving-kindness.
- To counteract conceit, contemplate the detailed divisions of phenomena, such as the eighteen elements, the twelve sources, and the twelve links of dependent origination. Seeing the enormity of what there is to understand, self-importance is deflated. In addition, by examining all the components of self, attachment to a real self will diminish.
- To counteract arrogance, reflect on the kindness of others. Seeing that our abilities, talents, and knowledge are due to the kindness of others deflates puffed-up pride.
- To reverse jealousy, rejoice at others' happiness, good qualities, good opportunities, and merit.
- To remedy anxiety and deluded doubt, observe the breath. Focus your attention on the gentle flow of your breath without allowing the mind to spin with fabricated, self-centered stories.
- When you are confused and cannot discern virtue from nonvirtue or what to practice from what to abandon on the path, study the sutras and scriptures. They will provide excellent guidance.
- **To lessen disturbing emotions in general, remember that they are not you; they are not who you are and are not embedded in the nature of your mind."**

This list of counterforces comes from the Dalai Lama and Thubten Chodron's book *Samsara, Nirvana, & Buddha Nature* (p. 114).