



**The Six Paramitas**  
**by**  
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I was requested to teach on the six perfections—I believe you want me to teach on the six paramitas, that is the six perfections.

The six paramitas are generally the practice of a bodhisattva—it is a practice of the Mahayana and is taught in the sutras. At the same time, the six paramitas, all aspects of it actually, have to be part of the practice in the Theravada as well as Vajrayana, although it is part of the practice of Mahayana.

When people translate paramita as 'perfection' I don't really know whether it exactly translates the meaning precisely or not, because when it comes to certain things I am a perfectionist, and I suffer from it, it is not a nice thing. It is bothersome, because nothing is going to be perfect. Impossible! As long as it is something, just by being something, it is not perfect. How can something be perfect? I am not a perfectionist in everything, but in certain things, things that I am allergic to I am a perfectionist about.

So there is some shortcoming in this word 'perfection'. I don't know exactly how paramita translates from Sanskrit into English, but it is translated into Tibetan as *pa-rol-tu-jin-pa*, which is a description: *pa-rol* means 'other side' and *jin-pa* means 'reached'. For example, we are supposed to be diligent, but then for how long? How many years, how many lifetimes, how many eons do we have to be diligent for? There has to be an end, because we cannot be diligent forever. It is very depressing. It is the same with generosity. How long do we have to be generous for? And how generous do we have to be? There has to be an end to it. It is also the same with meditation. How long are we supposed to meditate for? One lifetime? Ten lifetimes? A million lifetimes? A billion lifetimes? How long? And how much is enough? In that way, for each one of the six aspects of the practice, which are described very clearly in the sutras, there is the completion of that.

For example, you need a boat and oars until you get to the other side of a river. But then once you get to the other side of the river you don't have to carry the boat and the oars, unless you are going to cross another river. That way each one of these practices, such as generosity, morality, diligence, patience, meditation and wisdom, all of this has a completion, you complete it. That is the meaning of *pa-rol-tu-jin-pa*, which is a description—reached to the

other side. *Jin-pa* means already reached there, gone there, *pa-rol* means the other side, and *tu* is a grammatical word to put these two words together.

### Generosity Paramita

When we say 'generosity' normally we think of giving some money or something to others. But that is just one kind of generosity. That is called *sang-zing nor-gye jin-pa*. *Sang-zing* means chaotic, but it is also descriptive, because *sang-zing* means worldly, samsaric. *Nor* means valuable things, belongings, and *jin-pa* means giving. So everything, food, clothes, jewellery, money, all of that is *sang-zing nor*. *Jin-pa* means giving. So giving of that is *san-zing nor-gye jin-pa*.

The second aspect of *jin-pa* is *min-zid khyap-gyi jin-pa*. *Zid-pa* means fear, so *min-zid-pa* means no fear. *Khyap* means protection, refuge. So you are giving protection to those who are afraid, giving protection to others; that is *min-zid chap-gyi jin-pa*.

Then out of all the generosity the final one is *dam-pa cho-gyi jin-pa*. *Dam-pa* means sacred, profound, noble, *cho* means dharma, and *jin-pa* again means giving. So teaching the dharma, transmitting the lineage of the dharma is *dam-pa cho-gyi jin-pa*.

So these three are a summarized version of generosity.

Then paramita means when it reaches beyond dualism and triplicity. 'I' am 'giving protection' to 'him or her'. So these three things: I am, him, and giving protection. Or, 'I' am 'giving food' to 'her' or, 'I' am 'teaching dharma' to 'them', these three things. When one truly reaches beyond these three—no duality, no triplicity—then you reach the generosity paramita. It is like Buddha teaching the dharma—manifesting the dharma is the outcome of the generosity paramita, because Buddha was not thinking, Buddha was not planning, Buddha was not reacting to somebody's reaction. It is a spontaneous manifestation according to the capacity of the recipient. The teaching of dharma by the Buddha is non-dualistic.

These days a lot of people have an interest in Buddhism, but then their description of the Buddha is like, 'Buddha said it, Buddha taught about it, but if Buddha was alive today he would say it differently because times have changed'. All this sort of thing. That shows that those people don't really know or believe in what exactly Buddha is. Buddha is limitless, Buddha is non-dualistic, Buddha is free of triplicity; so all teachings are a manifestation, not an outcome of good homework. What I am presenting to you here is a result of my homework, because I have to sit down and make notes. I remember, but in case you overwhelm me and I blank out I have a note here, for security. That has never happened to me, I am a pretty thick faced

person, I have an iron mask. But it could happen—my iron mask might melt, so I have security here. But the Buddha's teaching is spontaneous, non-dualistic and non-triplicistic.

So that is the outcome of the generosity paramita. Then for people like us, how do we reach the generosity paramita? There is not much we can do actually because it all depends on our maturity of self, ego, attachment, anger, jealousy, pride, all of these things. It depends on how much of that we are able to tame, how much of that we are able to transform, and how much of that we are able to realize. It has everything to do with that. There isn't much we can do to speed it up except be very diligent, very sincere and very genuine. But of course that also happens when we have all the conditions for it within us, otherwise if we just try to look like we are genuine and try to look like we are sincere then it is like brainwashing ourselves. But nothing will happen by brainwashing ourselves, we have to truly become.

Whatever compassion that we develop has to be true compassion, and whatever devotion that we develop has to be true devotion, not forged or pretend. So we can walk like a bodhisattva, we can talk like a bodhisattva, we can dress like a bodhisattva, but we have to truly be a bodhisattva, otherwise we are not, we are just a bodhisattva actor. If you act like a bodhisattva you are just an actor. We have to truly be bodhisattvas from inside.

So everything boils down to practice, practice of all levels—you cannot practice one paramita without practicing all the other paramitas, they are all interconnected. You cannot isolate one paramita in practice. In teaching, yes, you can teach about one paramita today and another paramita tomorrow—you might even have an exam on it, you might pass, you might fail—but in practice all paramitas are together. You cannot only practice the generosity paramita without morality, without diligence, without meditation, without wisdom, without patience. You have to practice them all together; you will practice them altogether; you cannot practice them separately.

Generosity by definition is... we have attachment to what we have, which is a normal thing. Why? Because we are sentient beings in samsara. So having attachment to things that we have is normal—we want to keep our body clean, we want to make ourselves look good, we want to keep our favourite things nicely. We can give away most things but not some things. Sometimes it can be as silly as an 80-year-old person holding onto their childhood teddy-bear. That happens. I have a teddy bear. A long time ago an old Japanese man gave me a teddy-bear, and my teddy-bear is the best teddy-bear that there is. That is the case with everybody. Everybody has something—some have a Mickey Mouse, some have dolls, others have rings or diamonds or something. Everybody has something. A religious person will have relics and those kinds of things which they will hold on to very tightly and wouldn't part with. All of this is the base for generosity.

Then of course the needy, those who need food, those who are poor, those who are hungry, those things are out there. So you practice generosity to benefit them. At the same time, naturally it makes you accumulate merit, because somebody who is desperate, you relieve them from their desperation, even just for three hours by giving one meal. That is merit; you helped them to feel comfortable for three hours. That is not bad, that is good. Then if you give somebody who is cold and freezing a blanket and it lasts maybe through the winter, they can keep warm for the winter, that is good, that is not bad.

But it's not only that, it also makes you able to have less attachment for what you have. When you have less attachment for what you have then you will have less envy for what you don't have. That also happens naturally. We might be able to give away everything that we have got because we don't like it, but then we like to have all kinds of things that we don't have, because we like something else. That's why people have garage sales; they like to get rid of all their old furniture and old things so that they can buy new things that they like. But selling things very cheap in a garage sale is not generosity.

Anyway, attachment is the main defilement of human beings—we know how to be attached to so many things, we are more capable of complex attachment than animals. Animals have attachment but they have attachment for simple things. Their attachment is very fixed and predictable, but our attachment is very sophisticated. Sometimes we don't know ourselves, we also get confused about ourselves—attachment can have all kinds of overlapping attachment, attachment to having no attachment for example. So all of these things we have to deal with step by step.

First of all we have to have attachment to not having attachment. Once we achieve that then we have to overcome that. But that we only deal with when that happens, not now. If we try to deal with that now then we will be confused. It is like somebody who wants to do a three-year-retreat but then wants to know what they are going to do afterwards. This happens. People come to me and say, "I want to do a three-year retreat, my Lama accepted, I got a place, everything is fixed, but now, please advise me what I should do when I come out." Then the whole thing is spoiled right there. But for some people their perception is such that they have to think like that. They don't know how to think otherwise. That is also their karma and their merit. Their perception is the outcome of all of their karma.

So generosity is not just to make poor people rich, it is so much deeper than that. If it were just to make poor people rich, then we would first have to define who is poor because there are so many different levels of poor—money-poor, knowledge-poor, wisdom-poor, capability-poor, appreciation-poor, satisfaction-poor, contentment-poor, all kinds of poor. So which one do we have to deal with first? And how do we make them all rich—knowledge-rich, wisdom-rich, financially-rich, contentment-rich—all of this? That way we would never reach the

paramita. We would have to make all sentient beings in the entire universe rich in everything, then we would achieve the generosity paramita. But it's not that. When we are free from triplicity, when we are free from duality, then we have reached the generosity paramita.

### Morality Paramita

When it comes to the second paramita, which is morality, normally we get the general concept that morality means not doing bad things. That is true, but that is just one form of morality. We call that *nye-chud dom-pe tsul-trim*, which means you are keeping away from doing wrong things. But then another aspect of morality is *ge-wa cho-dud-kyi tsul-trim*, which is doing what is positive and what is good. The third and final aspect of morality is doing beneficial things for other sentient beings, which overrules the first and the second aspects; what benefits others. Whether for yourself it is positive or negative, if it is beneficial and meaningful for others, then that is the most moral. That way morality has three aspects. It is not simply, don't do this, don't eat that, don't drink that, don't smell that, don't even look at that, you know, all that sort of morality. So there are many levels to it and lots of depth in it.

### Patience Paramita

Then when it comes to patience or tolerance, normally it is about some difficult things—some people try to irritate and provoke you, then you keep cool, so that is being patient. That is true, that's one aspect of it, but there are quite a few others also. When some sentient being or individual is tormenting you or doing something that you don't like, and you are tolerating it, you are not reacting to it in a negative way, that is one aspect of patience, which we call *no-che la chi mi-njam-pe zo-pa*. *No* means 'harm', *che* means 'doer'—who is doing harm to you—*la* is 'to', a grammatical word, and *chi mi-njam-pa* means 'ignoring', you are able to ignore, you are able to not mind. For example, if somebody goes on and on talking badly about you, then instead of taking it personally you listen to it like music. It's just noise, that person is making noise, yap, yap, yap, so just let the person say everything that he or she likes to say and then when they are finished, you say "Are you finished?" Then the person says "Yes!" Okay fine, then nothing happens. Otherwise you will say something back, then back and forth and it will go on forever. Sometimes somebody even loses a few teeth and is not able to speak for a couple of days. So these things won't happen. It is very good if you are able to prevent such things by being tolerant and patient.

Another thing is *dug-ngal dang-len-kyi zo-pa*: *dug-ngal* means suffering and *dang-len* means able to take it. So whatever difficulty happens you are able to handle it—you are durable, you are not made out of plastic, lead or gold, you are made out of stainless steel. So you are durable, you can take it. It is like a gear box for the biggest truck that can hold so many tons and so many twists and turns and won't break, it can hold on. That is *dug-ngal dang-len-kyi*

*zo-pa*—you are able to withstand, you have the stamina, you have the strength to face the suffering, and not only to face it but to make use of it, make it positive. Because, for example, difficult situations and problems, if you are able to look at them with a clear mind, they are good.

We have a saying, it has nothing to do with this, but it has a twisted meaning in it and some aspect of it will describe this. It is not dharmic or compassionate at all, but it is a common people's saying and attitude. So where I come from people will say, "The mightier your enemies, the more glorious for you (the warrior)." So if you are a great warrior you should have mighty, powerful, majestic, capable, and strong opponents, otherwise you look terrible. For example, if you are six and a half feet tall and weigh three hundred kilos and are fighting with someone who is only five feet tall and fifty pounds, then you look like a very poor warrior. Instead of them looking pathetic, you look pathetic. If you are six and a half feet tall then you should have enemies seven feet tall, ten of them, then you are a great warrior. So like that. If you have the capacity to handle negative situations and turn them into something positive, then the more negative the situation is, that much more it will have a maturing impact on you—you will accelerate your maturity by being able to transform it. It is like the more wood the bigger the fire. This is *dug-ngal dang-len-kyi zo-pa*.

Then the final, the third aspect is *cho-la-nge sem-kyi zo-pa*. That means faith, which is also an aspect of patience and tolerance, because everything is emptiness. You are truly able to understand it and you are truly able to comprehend it, so that is a capacity. You want to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings to attain Buddhahood, which is bodhichitta. That is also *cho-la-nge sem-kyi zo-pa*. You have to have limitless, unshakeable tolerance and patience in order to truly mean it. It is very easy to say it, they are nice words, "May there be no hunger in the world, may all sentient beings become Buddhas, may everyone become brothers and sisters." These are nice things to say, but truly to be able to mean it from the depth of your heart is *cho-la-nge sem-kyi zo-pa*, which is a very important aspect of patience.

### Diligence Paramita

Normally we think that if we are able to go on and we are not lazy, that is diligence. That's true, that's one aspect of it. But also there is *gho-che tson-dru*. *Gho-che* means armour. In the old days when you went into battle you wore armour. Why you wear armour is because from the beginning of the battle until the end of the battle you don't want to be wounded. You know the enemy, so according to the enemies' weapons you would wear that kind of armour—thick metal armour or thin plate armour or woven chain armour. Also people wore armour according to their task. If they were supposed to face enemy archery, they would wear a certain kind of armour. The best is supposed to be chain armour, because wherever the arrows hit, the chains will come together there. So it will have an automatic concentration of

protection where-ever it is needed, but the rest of the body can breathe. So all of this, and that is called gho-che tson-dru.

Now what is that for us who wish to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings, what kind of armour do we need? We need bodhichitta, our original profound and sincere bodhichitta. So no matter what happens, I will never break my bodhisattva vow. That vow, that determination is the armour. So no matter what happens, if an axe comes, or a sword, a spear, a club or an arrow comes, you will be able to withstand it, because your armour is unlimited, your armour is incorruptible and totally determined. That is gho-che tson-dru. That is one aspect of diligence. No matter what happens you will go on because of your original motivation and determination.

Another one is *ge-wa la tro-we tson-dru* . That means doing good things—you enjoy doing good things, you don't get fed up or tired by doing good things. You can go on and on and on doing good things. Good things are prayer, meditation, being generous, being kind etc, all the positive and meaningful things you have joy in doing them. It's not that you will say "Oh my goodness, now I have to pray again!" You have to have the attitude that "When is prayer, when is meditation? It's too late, why don't we start?" You have to have joy. You don't think, "not again!" That is the *ge-wa la tro-we tson-dru*. *Ge-wa* means virtue, positive, and *tro-we* means joy.

Then the last is called *sem-chen tson-dru*. That means doing things for others, doing beneficial things for sentient beings. Then you are diligent. If you start doing something for others, then you start from the beginning and continue; you have patience and tolerance to go on, you don't waver half way.

So those are the three aspects of diligence.

#### Meditation Paramita

Generally meditation means, with an object or perception or without an object or perception, you are letting your mind rest in peace in the nature of its primordial state. The meditation is described here as *thongwe chola dewar nepe samten* ; *thongwe chola* means whatever you see, whatever is there, *dewar* means comfortably, *nepe* means remaining and *samten* is meditation. You do meditation practice like Shamatha so that whatever is there, everything is okay. You are able to maintain your calmness and stability no matter what is happening, wherever you are. For example, if you are in the middle of a street, you are calm. If you are in a temple, you are calm. If you are in the middle of a disco, you are calm. If you are in the middle of a kitchen where they cook chili and cut onions, you are calm—that will be very

difficult, that will be the worst one! But anyway, you are able to maintain your sanity, your calmness and clarity in every situation. That is called *thongwe chola dewar nepe samten*.

The second aspect of *samten* (meditation) is *yon-ten dru-pe samten*. *Yon-ten* normally means knowledge, but here it really means wisdom. Wisdom and knowledge are slightly different. So this is meditation that goes further than just being able to maintain your stability and clarity. The wisdom which is within each one of us we call primordial wisdom, Buddha nature, ultimate bodhichitta, ultimate emptiness, ground Mahamudra or rigpa. All of these are the same thing. Then to be able to mature that, to be able to develop that, to make that manifest, is another kind of meditation. For example, if we are doing yidam practices, we are doing all kinds of visualizations and recitations, all of this is for this. Of course it is for the first one too, but it goes further than that.

Then *sem-chen ton-che chi samten*. The final one is to benefit other sentient beings; that is realization, true realization, because if you don't have realization you can't benefit other beings as a Buddha. The Buddha Prince Siddhartha, after his enlightenment, all the dharma manifested. Even today his dharma manifests. Prince Siddhartha's body died 2500 years ago—Buddha lived until he was eighty-one, therefore it's not exactly 2500 years, but Buddha's paranirvana was a long time ago—but that is the nirmanakaya of the Buddha, Prince Siddhartha. The sambhogakaya and dharmakaya are primordial. The nirmanakaya and sambhogakaya are manifestations of the dharmakaya.

Buddha manifests in countless ways, even as a garden, as water, as rain, as a sun, even as a bridge, anything. Some of the aspiration prayers say, 'May I become a ship to those who are stranded in the ocean. May I be a lamp to those who need a light'. And 'May I become a bridge to those who cross a river'. You can say that symbolically as well as truly. That way Buddha is like a ship, Buddha is like a bridge and Buddha is like a lamp. That is one way, but Buddha also manifests in countless, numberless ways. Therefore Buddha can manifest in any way. There is no limitation to the ways in which Buddha can manifest. If there is limitation then it is not Buddha, it is something less than Buddha.

So *sem-chen ton-che chi samten* means the deepest meditation, (which will be, for example, the meditation of a tenth level bodhisattva, compared to our meditation,) is not meditation at all, it is just being; for us that is just being. But for them, compared to Buddha, it is meditation, because a tenth level bodhisattvas will still have post-meditation and meditation state differences. For a Buddha there is no post-meditation and meditation state differences, all is primordial. That is the third aspect of meditation.

## Wisdom Paramita

When it comes to wisdom, of course everything is about wisdom, but the practice of wisdom is first listening—you receive the transmission of wisdom by receiving the words of the lineage, that way you receive the lineage of transmission of wisdom by hearing. Second is what you have heard, what you have learnt, you contemplate on that, you are practicing that. You are contemplating on that so that it becomes more clear, deeper and more profound. That we call *sam-pe she-rab*, the wisdom of contemplation.

The final wisdom is the wisdom of meditation. That is actually primordial wisdom that manifests from within because of meditation. You cannot develop primordial wisdom by any kind of exercise or by learning about primordial wisdom from books and words because it is in you. It is not somewhere, you cannot acquire it; you don't have to acquire it, it is in you. Primordial wisdom has to manifest from within you, and that is through meditation. So that is *to-pe sherab*, *sam-pe sherab*, *gom-pe she-rab* (wisdom from hearing, contemplation and meditation).

When you say ten paramitas then everything is the same, but then the wisdom paramita is divided into four: *thab* (method), *thop* (strength), *monlam* (aspiration) and *yeshe* (primordial wisdom). So when wisdom is divided into four it becomes ten paramitas, but the six paramitas somehow include both because wisdom is both wisdom as well as primordial wisdom. You get the knowledge kind of wisdom, the intelligent kind of wisdom, by listening and contemplating, but primordial wisdom manifests through meditation. That is the final one.

I will say this one more time, paramita means all of these six aspects—when you reach the non-dualistic state, the non-triplistic state of this, then it is paramita. Although in some texts it is mentioned that you reach the realization of the first paramita and you reach the realization of the second paramita etc, it is described like that, but truly, all paramitas you reach almost at the same time. For example, you cannot reach the generosity paramita and not the morality paramita, because the generosity paramita has its morality, also you have to have diligence, you have to have meditation, you have to have wisdom, all of that. Otherwise, how can you have just the generosity paramita and no other paramita? So we can learn each paramita separately, but in practice, in realization, it is all interconnected, they are six aspects of one primordial thing. More than one, it is just primordial. So six aspects of it; it could be ten aspects of it, it could be a million aspects of it, but Buddha manifested the teaching as six paramitas or ten paramitas.

In some texts like the *Entering the Middle Way* (Tib. *Uma La Jukpa*, Skt. *Madhyamaka Avatara*) the ten bhumis and ten paramitas are explained as somewhat linked. But that is just a way of teaching, it is not really that a first level bodhisattva reaches the generosity paramita

but not the morality paramita, and a second level bodhisattva reaches the morality paramita but not the patience paramita. It is not like that. All ten levels of bodhisattvas reach all the paramitas, but deeper and deeper and deeper. So the tenth level bodhisattva is the deepest of the paramita.

Then the bottom line for the whole thing is, all of us are in samsara because of our ignorance, but ignorant of what? Ignorant of primordial wisdom, the primordial essence. When you are ignorant of the primordial essence, then you are ignorant of everything. For example, if you are blind then you can't see anything, but it doesn't mean that everything is not there. Everything is there but you don't see it because you are blind. In the same way, when we are ignorant then we are in samsara. Because of ignorance itself, being the self, the ego, then attachment, anger, jealousy, pride, all of these things are the inevitable outcome. For example, if you jump in a pool you get wet. That is natural. It's not that you need to do two things—jump in a pool and get wet. It is one thing. So if we are ignorant, then all these other things are the same thing, one thing, so many other things.

In order to overcome all of the karma, and even the habit of that, even the lightest, most transparent subtle imprint of it, you have to transform and then truly become what you ultimately are, which is the embodiment of primordial wisdom; limitless, free of all dualism and triplicity. So for that the six paramitas are practiced.

This is very interesting because one way of looking at it is that you are doing the six paramitas for yourself, but another way of looking at it is that you are doing the six paramitas for everybody else. But it's actually for both, because if you reach the six paramitas then you are limitless, so your benefit to sentient beings is just like Buddha Shakyamuni's benefit to us. Even after 2500 years Buddha Shakyamuni is still alive today in his teaching, in his blessing, and in his lineage, and we get benefit from him, we are inspired by him; he is a guiding light for us. That way it is a benefit to all sentient beings.

But the immediate benefit is of course that you save other people's teeth by being patient, and all your own teeth! Do you know what I am saying? If you get into a fight, people will punch you on the mouth and you will lose your teeth, right? So you will save your teeth and other people's teeth by being patient. Then of course by being generous you can make people feel comfortable, not hungry and cold. That kind of immediate benefit is there as well. And for you it is merit and it is purification. The more tolerant, the more generous, and the more moral you are, the less selfish, the less jealous, the less attached, and the less angry you are. All of these things naturally work simultaneously. That way it is for you, it is for others, it is for immediate benefit, it is for long term benefit and it is for ultimate benefit.

So that is what I can say about the paramitas. If you have questions, we have time.

## Questions

*Question:* How do we define what is beneficial? I'm not clear.

*Rinpoche:* I'm not clear either. But I have been defining these things most of my life, so I can define it. But I'm not sure. Why? Because there is nothing to be sure of, but not because there is something to be sure of and I am not sure. No, there is nothing to be sure of. When you do something for others, you have to do it from your side and you have to be as sincere and pure as possible, with no strings attached and no vested interest. You do it sincerely for them. That will somehow take care of some of the possible mistakes, because you are purely sincere.

If any vested interest is there, or if any strings are attached, then there will be more possibility that you will get it wrong. But still, there is no guarantee whether it is really beneficial for them or not. But there is a certain amount of benefit—maybe 90%, 80%, or 50% beneficial, that is still okay. But if it is 45% beneficial and 55% harmful, then it is not good. If it is 55% beneficial and 45% harmful, then it is okay, because you have achieved 5% benefit. That way I don't think we have to worry too much about thinking about what happens to others. A little bit of course, we have to be quite clear. But not too much, then you will never do anything because there is nothing that is perfect, except limitless, primordial perfectness. If you wait until everything is perfectly clear before you do anything then you will never do anything for many lifetimes. We have to do things, but I think we have to check ourselves first, that is very important. Our motivation has to be pure, with no strings attached and no vested interest. It has to be purely and genuinely for the benefit of others. If we are able to check that, then it will be good.

But how much we are able to do depends; we have to accept our shortcomings. Right now our capacity for doing our best and ten years from now our capacity for doing our best will be different. As we evolve our best will evolve. As we evolve our worst also evolves. For example, some of us cannot do some bad things that some of us will be able to do easily, even now. Also there are some good things that some of us are able to do very easily but others of us will not be able to do at all now. So these capacities, both negative and positive, should progress, not degenerate. And as long as it is progressing we should be happy about it. That is in our hands. With our guru's help, with our friends, help, with our sangha's help, it will make a difference, but really, it is all in our hands. We have to do the work. I mean no matter what kind of food they put in front of you, you are the one who has to eat it. If you don't eat it you will go hungry. It doesn't matter what is there. So it is like that.

*Question:* Rinpoche, when one is practicing, let's say the paramita of generosity, one can become very egotistical, 'I am such a good person, I am giving all this' etc. So how does one deal with that?

*Rinpoche:* That is what I'm talking about, having strings attached and vested interest. If you have no strings attached and no vested interest then it is purely generosity for generosity.

*Same Student:* But in the beginning that always happens.

*Rinpoche:* Yes, in the beginning it happens, but you should do your best not to be like that. That is with everything, we have to do our best. There is no way to describe it because everybody's best will be different, and everybody's best for different things will be different. For example, your best for something will be the worst for somebody else. But your worst for something may be the best for that other person. It will be different. For example, everyone of us looks like the same type, like a tree, but each tree in this world, of the same species, is different. We cannot find identical trees of any kind. It could be a banyan tree, a cedar tree, or a Christmas tree, but you cannot find two trees that are exactly the same in everything. That way, the best of everybody is different. So it has to be individually doing one's best.

*Question:* How do you remove the big ego?

*Rinpoche:* The whole thing is for removing one's big ego. Do you have a problem with a big ego?

*Same Student:* I meant in general.

*Rinpoche:* I have a big ego. I have a mega ego; I have a bona pista ego. But knowing that you have a bona pista ego is a beginning. If you don't even know that you have a bona pista ego, then that is a big problem. A bona pista ego is Napoleon Bona pista [Bonaparte], Napoleon ego. He was a great person, but lots of ego.

*Question:* I thought that when practicing generosity the other elements will also be practiced.

*Rinpoche:* Like what?

*Same Student:* Like patience, tolerance, morality. When I am being generous I would not think negatively or evil of the person or how dirty they are, or that I will not go near them while giving them money for example. Or not feel suspicious for example when I am helping somebody.

*Rinpoche:* No, you don't expect that your enlightenment will happen like an automatic umbrella! It will happen slowly, step by step. Of course, if you are driving and stop at a traffic light and a person with all their fingers missing and bones sticking out comes toward you, you want to give them money, but you don't want to touch them. This I understand. Of course that has something to do with ego, but it's not bad, because if you touch that person you might become like them, then that person will have the karma of making you like that. So why do you want to do that? I don't want to become like that. I want to keep my fingers. But I want to help those people. So what I do is to open my window a little bit and give them five or ten rupees; but I throw it a little bit so that the person will catch it. I will not put the money in their hand because then I might get their disease. If I get their disease it will not help that person.

So this is something that you should not worry too much about, just do your best and that way you will evolve. But if you really reach a high level of realization, even if you touch that person, instead of you getting their disease, that person will get healed. But if you are not at that level then you had better just do what I mentioned, and pray for that person to get well. You should not have misgivings and misperceptions about yourself, that's also ego.

*Question:* When doing one's best in generosity, one can have enormous painful experiences because of a lack of wisdom, or the wisdom to know the difference—how to stop, when to stop, how much to give, when to give and so on.

*Rinpoche:* That is not a problem.

*Same Student:* It is very painful.

*Rinpoche:* Painful? How? What kind of pain? For example, people say "somebody hurt me" but then I see there are no bruises, so they are not really hurt. They are talking about something mental, something inside. When I say I am hurt, that means somebody hit me, so there will be a bruise, I am hurt. But when people say 'hurt' they mean different things. So when you say 'it hurts' you mean that mentally you feel somebody betrayed you—you trusted a person and that person betrayed you—and all of that?

*Same Student:* All of that, and frustration and discomfort and not being able to focus for a while, making notes, writing a journal and asking friends what shall I do now? My god, I'm gone.

*Rinpoche:* No. You are okay. I think, with due respect, what you are saying is maybe somewhat true for all of us, but a little bit irregular.

*Same Student:* Irregular means!

*Rinpoche:* Not exactly like that. I mean all of us go through all kinds of things like that but you are reacting to it in a way that is a little bit different than the way the majority of people react. I have to be honest. I'm not diplomatic. You are taking it too personally, because things happen in life and we have to deal with them and sometimes we just have to forgive, but we can never forget. When people say "forget it," I don't believe it. I can never forget, unless I forgot by mistake, but I can forgive. When somebody does something wrong I can forgive them, but I cannot forget it. For example, because a dog who bit me once may bite me again, I will not forget that. Remembering is very important because that same dog might bite you again if you forget that it had bitten you before. But you should forgive it. So you should forgive the person but not try to forget it, but also don't make it more than what it is.

I will give you an example. If I hold my thumb near my eye then it is bigger than the whole universe. But if I hold it at arms length—my arm is not very long—then it is just my thumb. So maybe you are holding your problem too close to your eye.

*Same Student:* Taking myself too seriously?

*Rinpoche:* Taking yourself, everybody, and taking everything too seriously, maybe.

*Question:* Suppose the forgiven person does not forget. If they forget generosity and compassion they keep doing it again and again. I think that is what he meant.

*Rinpoche:* You should not forget what happened to you so that it will not happen to you again. But you forgive that person who did that to you. So you will forgive but don't forget. Lots of people say "forget it," but that doesn't make any sense to me, because if you forget it then you will never learn. It's not really positive, it's negative I think. You forgive it, that is virtue, remember it, that is good.

*Question:* Rinpoche, if somebody has mental problems, or a mental disorder, are they doomed, can they have a good rebirth? If due to some karma they have lost their mind in this life, what is their evolution?

*Rinpoche:* Let's put it this way, there is no difference between a crazy person and a sane person in the bardo. The difference is only in this life. As soon as you die and are in the bardo state, you are not crazy. Actually everything is crazy, all samsara is crazy.

*Question:* Rinpoche, if I have a certain tendency in this life, like if I am a very afraid person or a very angry person, would that worsen or remain the same in the bardo state?

*Rinpoche:* For a human being of planet Earth, in our galaxy, the bardo is a maximum of forty-nine days. It can be one second, three days or one week, but never more than forty-nine days. Of course it cannot be shorter than a moment. Then technically, up to half of the bardo, whatever that might be, has this life's subconscious state and the next half will develop the next life's subconscious state, because that karma is ripening. So in the middle there is another great chance for enlightenment, because it is neither here nor there.

*Same Student:* How would that happen?

*Rinpoche:* In the middle.

*Same Student:* But Buddha won't come there.

*Rinpoche:* When you say Buddha won't come there what do you mean? You can attain enlightenment there, if you are a great practitioner. In the bardo there are so many chances for enlightenment—the first bardo, the second bardo, the third bardo. The first one is when you die, that moment. When you are dying, if you are able to recognize your nature of mind—because your mind is not limited to the capacity of your body, crazy or whatever—that is one great chance. If you miss that, then the second is when you awake from that and get out of your body, because when you are still in your body, the karmic connection between your mind and body is very, very powerful, but once you are out of your body then you are totally free. So that is another opportunity. Then another state, which is a very profound state, is in between. That is a very pure state, a very primordial state. Then the last chance is when you get connected from the bardo, the limitless state to a limited state, the next life. That is the final chance.

*Question:* If you have performed one of the five heaviest sins, then the bardo cannot help you?

*Rinpoche:* No. It depends. This is called *tsam medpa nga*; killing your parents, an arhat, wounding a Buddha and creating a schism in the sangha, that sort of thing. That kind of negative karma is described as the most extreme and negative karma that one can accumulate or commit. Of course if the person has no regret, if the person is not mentally disturbed, but the person is sane and did it consciously and intentionally, and accomplished the deed and is happy about it and rejoices in it, then that person will have no bardo. That person will be born in whichever is the worst realm, right away. Also the highest realization person will have no bardo, because the moment of death will be realization.

*Question:* I don't understand what the bardo means?

*Rinpoche:* Bardo means the mind that continues in between this life to the next life, that period between. *Bardo* is Tibetan, it means 'in between'. *Bar-ma-do* is a little bit like limbo, not here, nor there. But *bardo* is a very clear word; in between this life and the next life.

*Question:* Rinpoche, you often use a number of words to describe a certain quality. You use the words mature, genuine, sincere and honest. You also said that it is through practice that one refines these qualities. I would imagine that when we talk about primordial wisdom, it's also these qualities which have everything to do with the heart and the mind together. Is this quality somehow related with that or not?

*Rinpoche:* I did not get one thing clear. When you say 'heart and mind together', what do you mean?

*Same Student:* What I mean to say is that if one has primordial wisdom but has not discovered it, one possibly cannot be genuine, but can one be an approximation of genuineness as one grows with one's practice?

*Rinpoche:* Everybody is somewhere, and compared to some you are further behind, and compared to others you are further ahead. But that doesn't really mean much because what will happen will be forthcoming. It is like a marathon—you might be first in the beginning part but not even a bronze medallist at the end. Also one could be the last at the beginning but after two hours of running then the last one gets the gold medal. So like that, it depends on the individual—individual diligence and paramitas, all of that. It depends on everything. But one thing, if I understand correctly, mind and heart and all of these things, we can say these things intellectually to describe something, but really we can't say that it is mind or it is heart. It is all together. It is like my mind is talking or my heart is talking or my mouth is talking. The whole thing is talking—my head as well as my heart as well as my mouth, including my hand.

*Question:* It may be that sometimes when we get very involved in samsaric neurosis we lose track of a certain amount of genuineness that we might otherwise have in better conditions. I think personally, I don't know if it applies to everyone, but it is important to understand that I am straying away from that level of genuineness or sincerity or whatever that I have known before. Is that a kind of a benchmark to quickly get back on track?

*Rinpoche*: I think I understand your question. When I was a child one of my hobbies was flying kites. I liked kite fighting and cutting. I was very good at it, it was my hobby. If it was bad weather then I would use plastic guti , but if it was good weather I would use paper guti . So I think according to the various situations and conditions that you are in you should use your practice and perception in a certain way. Each one of us is capable of this, but we have to tune to that and we have to adjust to that. For example, if it is about to rain and I fly my paper kite then it will be finished. It could be one thousand meters up and I can hardly see it, but when the rain comes and I try to bring it down I can't, because it will be finished. But if it is my plastic kite I will be able to bring it down. So like this. We have to use our various capacities and various abilities with mindfulness and awareness in various situations.

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