**Perfecting Qualities For Awakening**

The Pali term *parami* has been translated as perfection or completeness; in the Mahayana tradition the Sanskrit word is *paramita*. The translation of these words have two possible originations. Wikipedia cites them as:

“The first derives it from the word *parama*, meaning "highest", "most distant", and hence "chief", "primary", "most excellent"…A more creative yet widely reported etymology divides *pāramitā* into *pāra* and *mita*, with *pāra* meaning "beyond", "the further bank, shore or boundary," and *mita*, meaning "that which has arrived," or *ita* meaning "that which goes." *Pāramitā*, then means "that which has gone beyond," "that which goes beyond," or "transcendent."

In the context of these notes, I will use *parami* as the descriptive term. The following excerpt is from an ebook entitled “The Perfections Leading to Enlightenment *by Sujin Boriharnwanaket, t*ranslated by Nina van Gorkom”, on pages 9-10:

1. “Giving (dåna) has the characteristic of relinquishing; its function is to dispel greed for things that can be given away; its manifestation is non-attachment, or the achievement of prosperity and a favourable state of existence; an object that can be relinquished is its proximate cause.

2. Virtue (síla) has the characteristic of composing (sílana, observing); coordinating (samådhåna) and establishing (patiììhana) are also mentioned as its characteristic. Its function is to dispel moral depravity, or its function is blameless conduct; its manifestation is moral purity; shame and moral dread are its proximate cause.

3. Renunciation (nekkhamma) has the characteristic of departing from sense pleasures and existence; its function is to verify the unsatisfactoriness they involve; its manifestation is the withdrawal from them; a sense of spiritual urgency (saóvega) is its proximate cause.

4. Wisdom (paññå) has the characteristic of penetrating the real specific nature (of dhammas), or the characteristic of sure penetration, like the penetration of an arrow shot by a skillful archer; its function is to illuminate the objective field, like a lamp; its manifestation is non-confusion, like a guide in a forest; concentration or the four (noble) truths, is its proximate cause.

5. Energy has the characteristic of striving; its function is to fortify; its manifestation is indefatigably; an occasion for the arousing of energy, or a sense of spiritual urgency, is its proximate cause.

6. Patience has the characteristic of acceptance; its function is to endure the desirable and undesirable; its manifestation is tolerance or non-opposition; seeing things as they really are is its proximate cause.

7. Truthfulness has the characteristic of non-deceptiveness in speech; its function is to verify in accordance with fact; its manifestation is excellence; honesty is its proximate cause.

8. Determination has the characteristic of determining upon the requisites of enlightenment; its function is to overcome their opposites; its manifestation is unshakeableness in that task; the requisites of enlightenment are its proximate cause.

9. Loving-kindness has the characteristic of promoting the welfare (of living beings); its function is to provide for their welfare, or its function is to remove resentment; its manifestation is kindliness; seeing the agreeable side of beings is its proximate cause.

10. Equanimity has the characteristic of promoting the aspect of neutrality; its function is to see things impartially; its manifestation is the subsiding of attraction and repulsion; reflection upon the fact that all beings inherit the results of their own kamma is its proximate cause.”

Nina van Gorkem has been a student of Buddhist Abhidhamma for many years; she wrote “Cetasikas”, which has been a frequent source of study for me. She is very much prone to quoting from the classical commentaries, so her terms are somewhat out-of-date. She categorizes the paramis as having characteristic descriptions, functions, manifestations and proximate causes. One could also include in the list *concentration* and *investigation* as mental qualities to be perfected.

The intention in providing these terms for contemplation and integration into daily life routines is to provide key focal areas for spiritual development. What fosters the maturing of these qualities? Of course, regular, disciplined meditation practice is required, and the gains regarding internal awareness must be integrated into daily life routines. The wholesome cetasikas (mind conditioning functions) represent the “building blocks” of this process. Whenever any of the wholesome mind conditioners are activated, the paramis are nurtured. My particular interest has been the developmet of what are called the “6 beautiful pairs”: 1. Tranquility of mind and mental objects. 2. Lightness of mind and mental objects. 3. Pliancy of mind and mental objects. 4. Wieldiness of mind and mental objects. 5. Proficiency of mind and mental objects. 6. Uprightness of mind and mental objects. These qualities enhance the functionality of the mind, creating the mentality acuity and agility required for cultivating the perfections.

My hope is our explorations of the classic terms will further a deeper understanding of the concepts. Over the course of the next several meetings, we will discuss each of them more thoroughly, with more currently applicable terms, with the intention of fostering the development of the paramis in daily life.