

Introduction To Buddhism Series

Lecture 8 – Cultivating the Three Curriculums



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Introduction To Buddhism Series

Lecture 8 – Cultivating the Three Curriculums



□ A quick review.

➤ Topic One : General Introduction

- ➔ Buddhism is an **education**, not a religion or a philosophy.
 - It teaches us how to recover our wisdom and regain our Buddha nature.
 - It teaches us how to solve our problems through wisdom – an art of living.
- ➔ The **law of causality** governs everything in the universe.
- ➔ All sentient beings possess the **same Buddha nature**.
 - Our Buddha nature is temporarily **lost** due to **delusion**.
 - Our lost Buddha nature can be recovered **only** via **cultivation**.
- ➔ Karma refers to an action and its retribution under the law of causality.
 - **Good and bad karmas do not offset each other – prevailing ones occur first.**
 - Karmas, good or bad, accumulate over time and do not disappear.
 - When many bad karmic retributions come together, they form disasters.
- ➔ Cultivation means to stop planting bad seeds and nurturing bad conditions, and to, instead, plant good seeds and nurture good conditions.

Introduction To Buddhism Series

Lecture 8 – Cultivating the Three Curriculums



□ A quick review.

- Topic Two : Taking the Three Refuges and Accepting the Four Reliance Principles
 - ➔ We formally accept the Buddha's education and **set our goals** by Taking the Three Refuges.
 - Buddha (Awakening 覺), Dharma (Right or Proper 正), Sangha (Purity & Clarity 淨)
 - The Three Refuges are within ourselves.
 - ➔ We return to and rely on the **Three Refuges within ourselves** and accept the **Four Reliance Principles** provided to us by the Buddha to guide ourselves along the path of **cultivation**.
 - Rely on the Dharma, not on the persons who expound it. (依法不依人)
 - Rely on the meaning of the sutra, not just on the words. (依義不依語)
 - Rely on wisdom, not on perception. (依智不依識)
 - Rely on the sutras that can lead us to break out of delusion, not on the ones which won't. (依了義經不依不了義經)
(Sutras need to fit one's level, or they will not help.)
 - ➔ Four Reliance Principles also help us authenticate a teaching and the person who expounds the teaching.

Introduction To Buddhism Series

Lecture 8 – Cultivating the Three Curriculumms



□ A quick review (Cont'd)

➤ Topic Three : Recognizing the Four Noble Truths

➔ We begin cultivation by recognizing the Four Noble Truths:

- There is suffering in our lives. (苦)
- There is a cause or origin of sufferings. (集)
- There is a cessation of sufferings. (滅)
- There is a path leading to the cessation of sufferings. (道)

➔ Karma (業) refers to an action and its retribution under the law of causality.

➔ Sufferings occur because we are committing innumerable karmas every moment.

➔ Bad karmas are subsumed as **three poisons: greed (貪), anger (瞋), and ignorance (癡).**

- Greed, Anger, and Ignorance are also called the **Mind Karma (意業)** that drives our **Body Karma (身業)** and **Speech Karma (語業).**

➔ **Body Karma, Speech Karma, and Mind Karma** together

- **Seeded** and **are seeding** the causes of all sufferings of the past, present, and future
- **Conditioned** and **are conditioning** all sufferings of the past, present, and future

Introduction To Buddhism Series

Lecture 8 – Cultivating the Three Curriculums



□ A quick review. (Cont'd)

- Topic Three : Recognizing the Four Noble Truths (Cont'd)
 - ➔ Nirvana is the cessation of sufferings. (Nirodha 滅諦)
 - ➔ Nirvana can only be attained via continuous cultivation with diligence and focus, and when we reach Buddhahood.
 - ➔ Realization of the **Noble Eightfold Path** is **the path** to the cessation of sufferings, Nirvana.
 - Topic Four: The Twelve Links in the Chain of Causation
 - ➔ Clearly depicts the function of the law of causality in the death & rebirth cycle – Dependent Arising (Pratitya Samutpada 緣生)
 - **Due to the existence or production of A, B arises or is produced.**
 - ➔ Also explains how to “stop” the chain (Moksha 還滅)
 - **If we don't want B to arise or be produced, we MUST STOP the existence or production of A.**
 - ➔ The Twelve Links are:
 - First Link – Ignorance or Avidya (無明)
 - Second Link – Volitional Action (行)
- (Avidya and Actions are the Causes/Seeds (過去苦因) in the past, from which the present Effects (Dukkha, 現在苦果) arise.)**

Presenter: Bert T. Tan / Consultant: Venerable Wu Ling

Introduction To Buddhism Series

Lecture 8 – Cultivating the Three Curriculums



□ A quick review. (Cont'd)

➤ Topic Four: The Twelve Links in the Chain of Causation

➔ The Twelve Links are: (Cont'd)

- Third Link – Consciousness (識)
- Fourth Link – Name & Form (名色)
- Fifth Link – Six Sense Spheres (六入)
- Sixth Link – Contact (觸)
- Seventh Link – Feeling (受)
- Eighth Link – **Attachment** (愛)
- Ninth Link – **Grasping** (取)
- Tenth Link – **Existence** (有)

Consciousness through Existence are the seeds from which future Dukkha arise. (現在苦因)

- Eleventh Link – Birth (生)
- Twelfth Link – Aging and Death (老死)

Birth, Aging and Death are the future Dukkha (苦) arisen from the seeds of suffering we are presently planting. (未來苦果)

Introduction To Buddhism Series

Lecture 8 – Cultivating the Three Curriculums



□ A quick review. (Cont'd)

➤ Topic Four: The Twelve Links in the Chain of Causation

➔ **Attachments (愛), Grasping (取), and Existence (有) are the only ones over which we still have control.**

- Breaking out of the Chain from these places are definitely possible.
- It seems the easiest from Existence: stopping depositing anything into our consciousness.

➔ **Mahayana's Perspective of Four Noble Truths and Twelve Links (大乘佛法對四聖諦與十二因緣的觀察)**

- All dharma are conditionally arisen or existent (緣生).
- The sense of existence (生) of the Four Noble Truths and the Twelve Links in the Chain of Causation is also a false illusion; so is the extinction (滅) of them.
『無無明，亦無無明盡，乃至無老死，亦無老死盡。無苦集滅道，無智亦無得』。(般若波羅密多心經)
- Form and Emptiness do not differ in nature.
『色不異空，空不異色』(是指性相不二)
- Therefore, we should dwell on NEITHER existence NOR non-existence.
(不住空亦不住有)

Introduction To Buddhism Series

Lecture 8 – Cultivating the Three Curriculums



□ A quick review. (Cont'd)

➤ Topic Five: Understanding the Noble Eightfold Path

- ➔ It is the Fourth Noble Truth: Realization of the **Noble Eightfold Path** is the **only path** to the cessation of sufferings – Nirvana.
- ➔ Regardless of Theravada or Mahayana Buddhism, the Noble Eightfold Path is a **must**.
 - Right Understanding (正見)
 - Right Thought (正思維)
 - Right Speech (正語)
 - Right Action (正業)
 - Right Livelihood (正命)
 - Right Effort (正勤)
 - Right Mindfulness (正念)
 - Right Concentration (正定)
- ➔ It centered on teaching us to take the middle way (i.e., to avoid the extremes) (中庸之道) and to develop the proper cultivation path.
- ➔ All in all, live a simple life, i.e., on what we have, not on what we expect to have.

Introduction To Buddhism Series

Lecture 8 – Cultivating the Three Curriculums



□ A quick review. (Cont'd)

➤ Topic Six : Nurturing the Three Virtuous Conditions (Cont'd)

- ➔ Be **filial** to one's parents; respectfully **attend** one's teachers and all elders; **compassionately refrain** from killing; **cultivate** the Ten Virtuous Deeds (a.k.a. Ten Good Deeds).
『孝養父母；奉事師長；慈心不殺；修十善業』。
- ➔ Take the **Three Refuges**; uphold the **precepts**; conduct oneself in a **proper and decent** manner; and do not break laws and customs.
『受持三皈；具足眾戒；不犯威儀』。
- ➔ Give rise to the **Bodhi mind**; deeply believe in the **law of causality**; **recite and uphold** Mahayana sutras, and **encourage** and **help** others to advance on the path to enlightenment.
『發菩提心；深信因果；讀誦大乘；勸進行者』。
- ➔ Complete realization of all the Three Virtuous Conditions is imperative to the attainment of Buddhahood.
- ➔ The keys to success are:
 - Unwavering belief. (深信)
 - Unwavering vow. (切願)
 - Continuous practice. (實行)

Introduction To Buddhism Series

Lecture 8 – Cultivating the Three Curriculums



□ A quick review. (Cont'd)

- Topic Seven : Six Rules of Living in Harmony (六和敬):
 - ➔ The Three Virtuous Conditions are for self-cultivation, or practicing alone.
 - ➔ The Six Harmonies are for Sangha members practicing together.
 - ➔ A Sangha (和合僧團) consists of four or more people practicing together and abiding by the Six Harmonies, and is **comprised of monastic and/or laypeople**.
 - ➔ The Six Harmonies not only apply to Sanghas, but also to all teams or groups of any size, even as large as a country or the world.
 - ➔ Developing common goals (見和同解)
 - Our common goal is to attain enlightenment.
 - ➔ Abiding by the same precepts and rules (戒和同修):
 - Local laws and customs, and group rules are subject to change.
 - The fundamental precepts must be followed.
 - ➔ Living and practicing together (身和同住).
 - Utilizes group momentum to prevent one from backsliding on the cultivation path.
 - ➔ Refraining from arguing (口和無諍):
 - Revert to the Triple Gems whenever disagreements arise.

Introduction To Buddhism Series

Lecture 8 – Cultivating the Three Curriculums



□ A quick review. (Cont'd)

➤ Topic 7 : Six Rules of Living in Harmony (六和敬):

➔ Share the joy from cultivating together (意和同悦).

➔ Share the offerings equally (利和同均):

- Share our good fortune – give generously.
- Effectively use the Four All-embracing Methods/Virtues (四攝法).
- Give unsparingly (佈施).
- Kind words (愛語) – sincerely show our care for others' well being.
- Beneficial actions (利行) – always be mindful of others' interest and reflect on our behavior.
- Comradeship and cooperation (同事) – share the burdens of others.

Introduction To Buddhism Series

Lecture 8 – Cultivating the Three Curriculums



□ Cultivating the Three Curriculums.

- Nurturing the Three Virtuous Conditions and the Six Rules of Living in Harmonies are the methods for individual and group practices.
- Cultivating the Three Curriculums outlines the procedures along the cultivation path for individuals as well as for groups.
 - ➔ Precepts (戒)
 - ➔ Dyana (定)
 - ➔ Prajna Paramita (慧)
- They are the core courses of Buddhism education.
- “Purifying one’s mind is called upholding the precepts; upholding the precepts is the basis for achieving Dhyana; true wisdom arises from Dhyana when it functions.” (*Shurangama Sutra*) 『攝心爲戒，因戒生定，因定發慧』。(楞嚴經)

Introduction To Buddhism Series

Lecture 8 – Cultivating the Three Curriculums



□ Precepts (戒)

- The spirit of precepts is: “Avoid all that is evil, embrace all that is good, and purify the mind.”
『諸惡莫做，眾善奉行，自淨其意』。
- The purpose is to attain Dhyana.
- “Afflictions are innumerable; I vow to eradicate them all.” (One of the Four Great Vows)
『煩惱無盡誓願斷』 (四弘誓願第二願)
➔ To carry out precepts, we must uphold them.
- Buddha had very detailed explanation on the fundamental precepts in chapter 6 of the *Shurangama Sutra*. (楞嚴經 – 清淨明誨章)
- Precepts are preventive measures.
➔ Precepts serve to control and ultimately to eradicate our afflictions.

Introduction To Buddhism Series

Lecture 8 – Cultivating the Three Curriculums



□ Precepts (戒) (Cont'd)

- They are for self-discipline when one is by oneself as well as when interacting with others.
- They are not to be used as standards to apply to others.
 - ➔ Do not judge or criticize others.
 - ➔ “A person truly devoted to cultivation will not see others’ shortfalls.” (Patriarch Hui Neng) 『若真修道人，不見世間過』。(慧能大師)
- They include ‘do’s’ and ‘don’ts.’
 - ➔ ‘Don’ts’: Abstain from committing to bad karmas.
 - ➔ ‘Do’s’: Committing to nurturing good deeds.
- Abstain from committing to bad karmas.
(*Liao Fan’s Four Lessons* 了凡四訓)
 - ➔ Behaviorally 『從事上改』
 - ➔ Rationally 『從理上改』
 - ➔ Mentally 『從念上改』

Introduction To Buddhism Series

Lecture 8 – Cultivating the Three Curriculums



□ Dhyana (定)

- “Externally detaching from all phenomena is called Zen; internally not being disturbed by anything is called Dhyana” (Master Hui Neng) 『外離相爲禪，內不亂爲定』(慧能大師)
- Semantically, it means:
 - ➔ To extinguish afflictions from our mind (息慮)
 - ➔ To tranquilize our mind from pursuing conditions (靜緣)
- Dhyana is only attainable by upholding precepts.
- All Dharma schools or methods help us to attain Dhyana.
- Merit (功德) accumulates via Dhyana.
- Merit (功德) and Good Fortune (福德) are **not** the same; the latter is not associated with Dhyana.

Introduction To Buddhism Series

Lecture 8 – Cultivating the Three Curriculums



□ Prajna Paramita (慧)

- Refers to the wisdom that resonates with our Buddha nature.
- The ability arises from the function of Dhyana. (因定發慧)
- What it really means is “being able to free ourselves from confusion and witness the reality of the universe.” (去惑證理)
- Commentary notes to sutras are the reflections of the witnesses. Examples are the *Perfection of Wisdom Treatise* (大智度論), the *Awakening of the Faith Treatise* (大乘起信論), and the *Commentary on the Stages of Concentration Practice* (瑜伽師地論).
- Two kinds of commentary notes - sustras.
 - ➔ Expansion of the sutras (宗經論)
 - ➔ Explanation of the sutras (釋經論)
- Distinctions between commentary notes and annotations:
 - ➔ Commentary notes: authored by Bodhisattvas – as good as sutras.
 - ➔ Annotations: authored by masters and patriarchs.