

Introduction To Buddhism Series

Lecture 6 – Nurturing the Three Virtuous Conditions



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□ 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.

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□ 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.

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□ 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

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□ 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.)

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□ 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)

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□ 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)

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□ 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.

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□ Nurturing Three Virtuous Conditions (淨業三福):

- Recorded in *Aparimitayur Sutra* (觀無量壽經).
- 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**, laws and customs; conduct oneself in a **proper and decent** manner.
『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 others** to advance on the path to enlightenment.
『發菩提心；深信因果；讀誦大乘；勸進行者』。

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□ Nurturing Three Virtuous Conditions (Cont'd):

- Buddha Sakymuni told Queen Vaidehi (韋提希夫人): “For all Buddhas in the past, present, and future, these are the direct leading causes for them to be successful in cultivating the pure karmas.”

『三世諸佛，淨業正因』。

□ Karma revisited:

- Good karma: conditioned results will be in the good realms.
- Bad karma: conditioned results will be in the bad realms.
- Pure karma: conditioned results will be reaching at least a minimum level of enlightenment and breaking out of the Samsara (i.e., re-incarnation cycle 六道輪迴), and ultimately attaining Buddhahood.
 - ➔ Realization of the Three Virtuous Conditions is the pure karma.

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□ Be filial to one's parents. 『孝養父母』

- Filial: “Befitting a son or daughter <filial obedience>.” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)
- Our parents’ “favor” to us is **immeasurable**.
 - ➔ We will never be able to repay the favor throughout our lives.
- In addition to obedience, at a minimum, one should:
 - ➔ Take care of one’s parents **physically**. (養父母之身)
 - ➔ Take care of them **mentally**. (養父母之心)
 - ➔ Fulfill their **wills or vows**. (養父母之志)
- To expand filial piety, one should:
 - ➔ Serve one’s responsibilities elsewhere, too.
 - ➔ Serve one’s country loyally.
- Finally, one should:
 - ➔ Establish oneself as a role model for others both now and in the future.

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□ Be filial to one's parents. 『孝養父母』 (Cont'd)

- “One starts to be filial by attending one's parents, expands it to serving one's country, and finally establishes oneself as a role model for others at present and in the future.” (Confucius)
『夫孝，始於事親，中於事君，終於立身。』(孔子)
- The ultimate filial piety is to help them attain Buddhahood, and attain Buddhahood oneself.

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□ Respectfully attend one's teachers and all elders.

『奉事師長』

- “A teacher is to teach us the fundamental relationship between oneself and the society, the knowledge and skills to live in the society, and to help us answer questions in the learning process.” (Han, Yu in Tang dynasty) 『師者，所以傳道、授業、解惑也。』 (韓愈)
- Our teachers' favor to us is the same as that of our parents.
- The student-teacher relationship is the extension of the filial piety.
 - ➔ “Even if a teacher just taught us for one day, we should attend the teacher for the rest of our life just as if the teacher was our parent.” (一日為師，終身為父)
- Attending teachers must be with sincere respect.
 - ➔ The ultimate respect to our teachers is the complete realization of what they taught us. (如教奉行)

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□ **Compassionately refrain from killing.** 『慈心不殺』

- A few words about compassion.
 - ➔ It is **unconditional** and arises from our Buddha nature.
 - ➔ With compassionate mind, we see **the true equality of everything**, sentient-beings, non-sentient-beings, or materials.
 - ➔ “One unconditionally gives people happiness, and alleviates or removes sufferings of all beings because we are all one.” (無緣大慈，同體大悲)
- A person with true compassion will naturally refrain from killing.
 - ➔ “Killing” also includes harmful things one does to others, regardless of whether they are visible or invisible.
 - ➔ True compassion can only arise from **humility**.
- Then, what is it about abortion (墮胎) and euthanasia (安樂死)?
- Special notes on compassion:
 - ➔ Mercy is NOT compassion because it is on an un-equal basis.
 - ➔ Forgiveness is NOT compassion because it reflects righteousness.
 - ➔ Nevertheless, being merciful and forgiving is definitely better than no mercy and not forgiving. (We already have hard enough time to be merciful.)

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□ Cultivate ten virtuous/good deeds. 『修十善業』

- Buddha Sakyamuni emphasized this in *Greater Sukhavativyuna Sutra*, i.e., *Infinite Life Sutra*. (無量壽經)
- Good body karma:
 - ➔ No killing (不殺生), no burglary (不偷盜), no sexual misconduct. (不邪淫).
 - ➔ “Killing” includes any type of harmful actions.
 - ➔ “Stealing” refers to taking something without permission.
- Good speech karma:
 - ➔ No divisive speech (不兩舌), no harsh speech (不惡口), no deceitful speech (不妄言), no rosy or enticing speech (不綺語).
- Good mind karma:
 - ➔ No greed (不貪), no anger (不瞋), no ignorance (不癡).

□ Realization of the first virtuous condition is necessary to attain rebirth in the good realms (i.e., heaven-being and human-being realms).

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□ Take and uphold the **Three Refuges**. 『受持三皈』

- Returning to and relying on awakening of our own Buddha nature. (皈依佛)
- Returning to and relying on our ability to understand properly. (皈依法)
- Returning to and relying on the purity and clarity of our mind. (皈依僧)
- These are the guiding principles and the ultimate goals of Buddha's teaching.
- Accept and uphold the Three Refuges in our mind all the time.

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□ Uphold the precepts. 『具足眾戒』

➤ Why?

➔ “Purifying one’s mind is called upholding the precepts; upholding the precepts is the basis to achieve Dhyana; true wisdom arises from Dhyana when it functions.” (*Shurangama Sutra*) 『攝心為戒，因戒生定，因定發慧』。(楞嚴經)

➤ How? (*Sukhavati-vyuna Sutra, i.e., Infinite Life Sutra* 無量壽經)

➔ “To protect one’s speech karma, never laugh at or criticize others shortfalls.” 『善護口業，不譏他過』。

➔ “To protect one’s body karma, never offend any laws, ordinances, codes, and customs.”

『善護身業，不失律儀』。

➔ “To protect one’s mind karma, always keep one’s mind pure.”

『善護意業，清淨無染』。

➤ What?

➔ Do not commit any bad body karmas, speech karmas, and mind karmas.

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- ❑ Conduct oneself in a **proper and decent** manner; do not break any laws, customs, ordinances, and codes.

『不犯威儀』

- Laws, customs, ordinances, and codes represent the sovereignty of a locality.
 - One must be flexible and adapt to local customs and sincerely respect them.
- ❑ Realization of the first and the second virtuous condition is necessary to attain the minimum level of enlightenment (i.e., Arhant).

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□ Give rise to the **Bodhi mind**. 『發菩提心』

- Bodhisattva Ma-Ming (馬鳴菩薩) told us it is:
 - ➔ Straightforward mind. (直心)
 - ➔ Deeply sincere mind. (深心)
 - ➔ Compassionate mind. (大悲心)
- Master Chin Kung's (淨空) explanation:
 - ➔ Sincerity (真誠)
 - A person with true sincerity has no second thought in his or her mind. (Tseng Kuo Fang) 『一念不生謂之誠』 (曾國藩)
 - ➔ Purity and clarity (清淨)
 - Always keep our mind pure, not attached to or dwelling on anything. (離一切相)
 - ➔ Equality (平等)
 - Being humble, free from egotism and arrogance.
 - ➔ Awakening (正覺)
 - ➔ Compassion (慈悲)
- In other words, it's an **unwavering vow to become awakened**.

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□ Deeply believe in the **law of causality**. 『深信因果』

- Everything is conditioned
 - ➔ Any form of existence is due to the convergence of an infinite number of causes and conditions regardless of whether they are perceivable or not.
- Likewise, awakening or attaining Buddhahood is also conditioned.
- We seed the cause now - make an unwavering vow to be enlightened.
- We nurture the conditions - practice and cultivate diligently.
- We will attain Buddhahood when causes and conditions converge.
- “Being mindful of Buddhahood is the cause; attaining Buddhahood is the result.” (Master Chin Kung)
『念佛是因，成佛是果』。(淨空老法師)

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□ Recite and uphold Mahayana Sutras. 『讀誦大乘』

- Why recite the sutra everyday in the morning and in the evening?
 - ➔ It is a means to help us accomplish Dhyana – there are no second thoughts during proper recitation.
 - ➔ Reciting the sutra in the morning reminds us of Buddha's teaching before we begin our daily activities.
 - ➔ Reciting at evening helps us review whether we have applied and practiced the teachings in our daily affairs.
- One sutra is sufficient.
 - ➔ All Dharma teachings arise from our own Buddha nature.
 - ➔ Every sutra has the same effect of helping us see and attain our Buddha nature.
- The key is carrying out the teachings 100%.

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□ Encourage and help others to advance on the path to enlightenment. 『勸進行者』

- Introduce and explain the Dharma teaching to others.
- Help others whose conditions are maturing to accept and follow the Dharma teaching.
 - ➔ Quietly walk away when people are not ready to receive the teachings.
- Encourage them to continue their cultivation.
- The best way to realize the above is to establish oneself as a role model for others to follow.
 - ➔ Demonstration of happiness and joy of being a Buddha's student.
 - ➔ Demonstration of compassionate mind and behavior toward everything.
 - ➔ Demonstration of wisdom recovered through following Buddha's teaching.

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- ❑ **Complete realization of all the Three Virtuous Conditions is imperative to attain Buddhahood.**
- ❑ **The keys to success are:**
 - Unwavering belief. (深信)
 - Unwavering vow. (切願)
 - Continuous practice. (實行)