

Introduction To Buddhism Series

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



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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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□ 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)

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□ 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.

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□ 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.

➤ Topic 8 : Cultivating the Three Curriculumms (三學)

➔ The Three Learnings outline the procedures along the cultivation path for individuals as well as for groups.

- Precepts (戒)
- Dyana (定)
- Prajna Paramita (慧)

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□ A quick review. (Cont'd)

- Topic 8 : Cultivating the Three Curriculumms (三學)
 - ➔ Precepts are preventive measures to help us to control and eradicate our afflictions and ultimately to attain Dhyana.
 - ➔ Precepts include 'do's' and 'don'ts.'
 - ➔ Precepts are for self-discipline, and are not to be used as standards to apply to others.
 - ➔ Dhyana 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. (因戒生定)
 - ➔ Prajna Paramita refers to the wisdom that resonates with our Buddha nature.
 - The wisdom arises from the function of Dhyana. (因定發慧)
 - ➔ Prajna Paramita refers to “the ability to free ourselves from confusion and witness the reality of the universe.” (去惑證理)

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□ The Six Prajna Paramitas (六度)

- Paramita refers to completeness and **ultimate perfection**.
- Paramita means to “ferry to the other side”; that is, the enlightened side.
- Six paramitas are the six methods to ferry us to the enlightened side.
 - ➔ We will be on the enlightened side when karmic obstacles or obstructions are overcome and eliminated.
- These are the cultivation methods of Great Bodhisattvas.
- Why six methods?
 - ➔ To overcome our six categories of obstructions (六蔽)
 - Giving generously (布施) ⇔ Greedy and stingy mind (慳貪)
 - Upholding precepts (持戒) ⇔ Reckless and bad conducts (毀犯)
 - Patience and broadmindedness (忍辱) ⇔ Anger (瞋恚)
 - Zeal in practice (精進) ⇔ Laziness (懈怠)
 - Dhyana (禪定) ⇔ Wondering and confusion (散亂)
 - Prajna (般若) ⇔ Ignorance (愚痴)

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□ Giving Generously (布施)

- To overcome our greedy, and stingy mind.
 - ➔ Greedy: wanting to get things (tangible and intangible) one doesn't have.
 - ➔ Stingy: wanting to hold on to what one has.
- Three major categories of giving:
 - ➔ Material (財布施): tangible and intangible.
 - Share what I have.
 - The result of this type of giving is wealth.
 - ➔ Dharma (法布施): intangible.
 - Share what I know.
 - The result of this type of giving is intelligence and wisdom.
 - ➔ Peace (無畏布施): fearlessness.
 - Help others attain peace of mind.
 - The result of this type of giving is a healthy and long life.
- Giving must be formless (不著相布施).
 - ➔ Unconditionally from our heart.
 - ➔ Not for the sake of giving, nor for purposes of any kind.
 - ➔ “Bodhisattvas shall not dwell on any dharma and shall give generously . . . Bodhisattvas shall practice as such, formlessly . . .” (*Diamond Sutra*)
『菩薩於法，應無所住，行於布施 . . .菩薩應如是布施，不住於相 . . .』 (金剛經)

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□ Giving Generously (布施) (Cont'd)

- Giving is an effective way to eliminate feuds and conflicts. (除怨)
- Giving is also an effective way to eliminate karmic obstacles. (消障)
 - ➔ It is essential to break through delusion.
- The Giving paramita is attained when our mind is no longer greedy and stingy.
- Buddha provided details on the **merit** of giving in chapter 10 (校量布施功德緣品) of the *Sutra of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva's Fundamental Vows*. (地藏菩薩本願經)

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□ Upholding Precepts (持戒)

- To overcome our reckless, evil mind and conduct.
- “The mind and behaviors of Jambudvipa (南閻浮提) beings are full of evil and sin.” (*Sutra of Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha Fundamental Vows*)
『南閻浮提眾生舉止動念。無不是業，無不是罪』(地藏菩薩本願經)
- Three categories of precepts:
 - ➔ Laws and customs (律儀戒) : “do’s and don’ts”.
 - Different criteria for different levels on the cultivation path.
 - It is getting stronger and more strictly along the cultivation path.
 - ➔ Good conduct (善法戒) : benefits oneself.
 - Can help one progress on the cultivation path.
 - ➔ Good for others (益眾戒) : benefits others.
 - Help others accomplish good deeds.
- The spirit of precepts is to : “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』。
 - ➔ It is a preventive measure.

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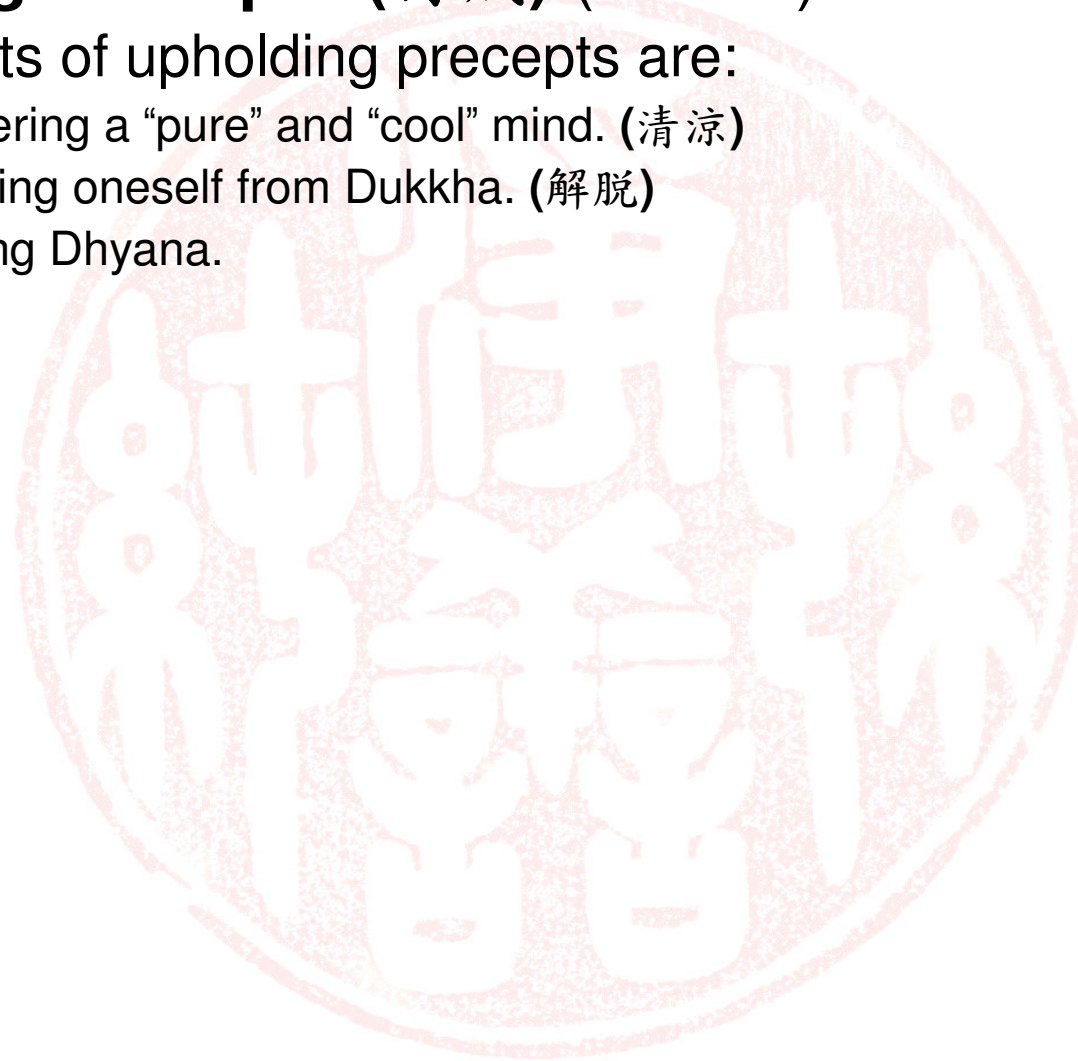
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□ Upholding Precepts (持戒) (Cont'd)

➤ The merits of upholding precepts are:

- ➔ Recovering a “pure” and “cool” mind. (清涼)
- ➔ Liberating oneself from Dukkha. (解脫)
- ➔ Attaining Dhyana.



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□ Patience and Broadmindedness (忍辱)

- To overcome anger and resentment (瞋恚).
 - ➔ Anger, which includes resentment, is one of the three poisons.
 - ➔ Anger burns one's merit (火燒功德林).
- To overcome anger one must **eliminate** it, not just suppress it.
 - ➔ Transform anger into Dhyana and into wisdom.
- Tolerate others' insults or harmful actions. (忍人害)
 - ➔ What I receive, or reap, accords with what I have planted.
 - ➔ In repaying a "debt.", one does so courteously and without.
- Tolerate Dukkha-Dukkata. (忍世苦)
 - ➔ This is also my karmic retribution so I have nothing to complain about.
 - ➔ Since what we receive are the results, we should work on creating good causes.
- Be patient with Dharma cultivation. (忍修法)
 - ➔ Our karmic obstacles have been accumulated over eons.
 - ➔ Cultivation takes effort and time; the key to success is **focus and patience**.

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□ Patience and Broadmindedness (忍辱) (Cont'd)

- What are the merits of patience and broadmindedness?
 - ➔ Not losing one has accomplished. (不失)
 - Not burning the merits we have accumulated.
 - ➔ Being able to accomplish cumulatively. (成就)
 - Gradually getting closer to Dhyana.

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□ Zeal in Practice (精進)

- Keeps moving forward on the cultivation path and do not be deterred.
- “I made progress today. I want to make progress everyday. I want to make progress repeatedly.”
『苟日新，日日新，又日新』。
- Must have focuses:
 - ➔ To counteract karmic obstacles. (披甲)
 - ➔ Embrace all good deeds that are in line with our Buddha-nature. (攝善)
 - ➔ For the benefits and well-being of all sentient beings. (利樂有情)
- The merit of diligence is elevating our virtues to different level and not backsliding. (增善、不退轉)

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□ Zeal in Practice (精進) (Cont'd)

- In Chapter six of *Shurangama Sutra*, Buddha told Ananda (who representing us) that one **MUST COMPLETELY, physically and mentally,**
 - ➔ Cut off lust
 - ➔ Cut off killing
 - ➔ Cut off stealing
 - ➔ Cut off false speech
- Otherwise, regarding lust, Buddha said: “. . . if people who want to cultivate Samadhi and do not cut off lust, they will be just like someone who cooks a pot of sand in the hope of getting a pot of rice. After eons, it will still just be a pot of hot sand. Why? It wasn't rice to begin with; it was only sand.”
 - ➔ **The causes must correspond to the results.**
- **The above are the main reasons for us to be in continuing succession of deaths and rebirths**

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□ Deep Concentration or Dhyana (定)

- To overcome wandering thoughts and confusion.
- Dhyana is the center of Dharma teaching, especially in Mahayana Buddhism.
 - ➔ The first four paramitas are the pre-requisites of Dhyana.
- “Externally detaching from all phenomena is called Zen. Internally not being disturbed by anything is called Dhyana.” (*Platform Sutra*)
 - 『外離相爲禪，內不亂爲定』(六祖壇經)
 - ➔ The focus is on tranquility of mind. (如如不動)
 - ➔ Externally, any form is good as long as the above can be attained.
 - ➔ Sitting meditation is just for beginners' convenience.
- There are three levels of Dhyana on the cultivation path.
 - ➔ The first level is attained in the Form and Formless realms. (色界、無色界)
 - ➔ The second level is attained at the Arhant level. (阿羅漢)
 - ➔ The third and the utmost level is attained at the Bodhisattva and the Buddha level. (佛、菩薩)

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□ Deep Concentration or Dhyana (禪定) (Cont'd)

- The first two levels are relative.
- The third level is constant; that is, it is the permanent state of Dhyana. (常定)
- The merits of Dhyana are:
 - ➔ Our clear and tranquil mind is recovered. (靜慮)
 - Afflictions are extinguished.
 - We will no longer pursue conditions, which is the cause of the Dukkha.
 - ➔ We will begin to see and witness our own true nature, Nirvana.

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□ Prajna (般若智慧)

- To overcome ignorance or delusion.
- It is the destination of our cultivation.
- It refers to the wisdom which arises from our Buddha-nature.
 - ➔ It is pure, clear, tranquil, and harmonious.
 - ➔ It is perfectly reflective as opposed to perceptive.
- The merit of Prajna is the complete enlightenment – Nirvana is witnessed and Buddhahood is attained.