

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



Sponsored By

Pure Land Center & Buddhist Library

**1120 E. Ogden Avenue, Suite 108
Naperville, IL 60563**

<http://www.amitabhalibrary.org>

Tel: (630) 428-9941; Fax: (630) 428-9961

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



□ A quick review

➤ Topic One : The Basics

- ➔ 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

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



□ A quick review

➤ Topic Two : The Three Refuges and 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

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



□ A quick review (Cont'd)

➤ Topic Three : The Four Noble Truths

➔ We begin cultivation by recognizing the Four Noble Truths:

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

➔ 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

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



❑ A quick review (Cont'd)

➤ Topic Three : 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.)

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



□ 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)

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



□ 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)

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



❑ 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

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



❑ 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)

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



❑ A quick review (Cont'd)

➤ Topic Seven : Six Principles 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 Jewels whenever disagreements arise

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



□ A quick review (Cont'd)

➤ Topic 7 : Six Principles 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 Curriculumms outline the procedures along the cultivation path for individuals as well as for groups

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

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



❑ A quick review (Cont'd)

➤ Topic 8 : Cultivating the Three Curriculum (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 Wisdom 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)

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



❑ The Six Prajna Paramitas (六度)

- Paramita refers to completeness and **ultimate perfection**
- Paramita means to “ferry to the other side” (到彼岸); 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)

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



❑ 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)

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



□ 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 第十品)

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



❑ 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

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



❑ 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

➤ IMPORTANT NOTES

- ➔ *Precepts are for self-discipline & cultivation*
- ➔ *NEVER apply Precepts to others and become judgemental!!*

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



❑ Patience and Tolerance (忍辱)

- To overcome anger and resentment (瞋恚)
 - ➔ Anger, which includes resentment, is one of the three poisons
 - ➔ Anger burns one's accrued 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)
 - ➔ Dukkha-Dukkata is my karmic retribution so I have nothing to complain about
 - ➔ Since what we receive are the results, we should work on creating good causes so as to receive good results
- 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**

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



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

➤ What are the merits of patience and tolerance?

➔ 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

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



❑ Zeal in Practice (精進)

- Keeps moving forward on the cultivation path and do not be deterred
- “I have renewed today. I want to renew everyday. I want to renew repeatedly”
 - 『苟日新，日日新，又日新』。
 - ➔ ‘renew’ in this context refers to ‘weed-out’ bad and ‘refresh’ with goods
- 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 a higher plateau and not backsliding (增善、不退轉)

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



❑ Zeal in Practice (精進) (Cont'd)

- In Chapter six of *Shurangama Sutra* (楞嚴經 清淨明晦章), 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 edible rice. After eons, it will still just be a pot of hot sand. Why? It wasn't the right base to begin with; it was 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**

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



❑ 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 attaining tranquility of mind (如如不動)
 - ➔ Externally, any form is as good as others
 - ➔ Sitting meditation is a convenient means for beginners
- 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)

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



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

- The first two levels are relative
 - ➔ The ones have recovered the ability to enter and exit the mind state of Dhyana
- The third level is constant; that is, it is the permanent state of Dhyana (常定)
 - ➔ The ones who have attained the permanent mind state of Dhyana
- 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

Buddhism 101: Introduction To Buddhism

Lecture 9 – Carrying Out the Six Prajna Paramitas



□ **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