

Month 6 of the PARAMITA CHALLENGE – February 2022

Perfection of Wisdom, the Bodhisattva Precept on Restraining Intoxication, and beginning the Ten Practices

Welcome to the Fifth Month of the Paramita Challenge!

波羅蜜多挑戰

Each month we will receive sets of topics for contemplation, one for each week of the month. The first set refers to the Perfections. Contemplate one topic each week during the month of **January, 2022**. The fifth set refers to the Concentration Paramita, the Precept on Intoxication Restraint, and the last stages of the 10 Abodes from the 52 Stages of the Bodhisattva. Again, take one stage at a time and contemplate this stage for a week.

Keep a journal record of your insights. The journal can be in the form of prose narratives, poems, artwork, etc.

Begin with observing your intentions, opportunities, and actions to be moral and ethical. Also, arouse your faith in the Triple Gem. See where/when you are confident and where/when you have doubts.

58 Bodhisattva Vows			
#	Chinese 菩薩十重戒	Pinyin Púsà shí zhòng jiè	English <u>The Ten Major Bodhisattva Precepts</u>
6	說過戒	shuōguò jiè	Don't discuss the faults of the Sangha.

The Commentary on the Sixth Precept is at the bottom of this email.

Sixth Paramita of Wisdom

Six Perfections and their Subdivisions from the <i>Sutra on Understanding the Profound and Esoteric Doctrine</i> 解深密經 Jiě shēnmì jīng			
Six Perfections 六波羅蜜多 liù pō luó mì duō	Three Subdivisions 三分 sānfēn		Contained within the precepts of
6 Wisdom (Discernment) 慧到彼岸 huì dào bǐ àn (Pāli <i>paññā</i> ; Skt. <i>prajñā</i>)	discernment that has conventional truth as its object 緣世俗諦慧 yuán shì sù dì huì		High Wisdom
	discernment that has ultimate truth as its object 緣勝義諦慧 yuán shèng yì dì huì		
	discernment that has as its object the benefiting of sentient beings, 緣饒益有情慧 yuán ráo yì yǒu qíng huì		

The Ten Paramitas
Definition and Varieties

Chéng wéishí lùn 成唯識論

Doctrine of Mere-Consciousness

The ten excellent moral exercises are the ten Paramitas.

十勝行者, 即是十種波羅蜜多

The Ten Paramitas in the <i>Chéng wéishí lùn</i> 成唯識論				
#	English (Wei Tat Trans.)	Chinese Sanskrit	Pinyin	Commentary
6	Discernment	般若 <i>Prajñā</i>	bōrě	<i>Prajñā</i> is of three kinds 般若有三種: (1) <i>Pudgalasunyata</i> -non-discriminating <i>Prajñā</i> (intuitive discernment of the voidness of the (self) Atman); (2) <i>Dharmasunyata</i> -non-discriminating- <i>Prajñā</i> (intuitive discernment of the voidness of all phenomena- <i>dharmas</i>); (3) <i>Pudgalasunyata-dharmasunyata</i> -non-discriminating- <i>Prajñā</i> (intuitive discernment of the voidness of (self) <i>Atman</i> and all phenomena- <i>dharmas</i>). 謂生空無分別慧、法空無分別慧、俱空無分別慧。
Fifty-Two Bodhisattva Vows				
Ten Practices 十行 shíxíng (stages 21-30)				
1	The practice of giving joy	歡喜行 huānxǐ xíng		We practice selfless giving to all sentient beings without any desire for reward
2	The beneficial practice	饒益行 ráoyì xíng		We practice maintaining pure self-control without any attachment to form, sound, smell, taste, or touch
3	The practice of non-opposition	無違逆行 wú wéi nì xíng		We practice continuous forbearance and tolerance, of being humble and respectful, of harming neither self nor others
4	The practice of indomitability	無屈撓行 wú qū náo xíng		We practice cultivation of great, unsurpassed energy, becoming naturally free from the three poisons of greed, hatred, and delusion
5	The practice of non-confusion'	無癡亂行 wú chī luàn xíng		We practice perfect right mindfulness, with a mind firm and imperturbable, consummately pure, immeasurably vast, without any delusion or confusion, so that the mind is free from distractions and disturbances

Commentary on the Fifth Precept
from the Brahma's Net Sutra by Master Hui Seng
The 6th Major Precept

Sutra:

The Sixth Major Precept prohibits discussing offenses of members of the Four Assemblies. A disciple of the Buddha must not himself discuss the offenses of any Bodhisattva *sanghan* (*sangha* member), bodhisattva layperson, bhikshu or bhikshuni, nor may he encourage others to do so or involve himself in the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of speaking of the offenses of the Four Assemblies. Whenever a Bodhisattva hears an evil-hearted externalist of evil exponent of the Small Vehicles speak of practices which are not in accord with the Dharma and not in accord with the Precepts within Buddhism, he should always feel **compassion** for such detractors, instruct them, and lead them to a wholesome belief in the Great Vehicle. If, instead, a Bodhisattva discusses the faults of those within the Buddha-dharma, he thereby commits a Bodhisattva *Parajika* Offense.

Commentary:

The sixth major precept prohibits discussing offenses of members of the Four Assemblies. "Discussing" in this case refers to speaking to people who have not taken the Bodhisattva Precepts, because if one were speaking to people who have already taken the Precepts, it might not be such a heavy offense. But here it refers to speaking to people who haven't taken the Bodhisattva Precepts about the offenses of the Seven Assemblies within the Great Vehicle. The Seven Assemblies are:

- 1.) Bhikshus. (fully ordained male)
- 2.) Bhikshunis. . (fully ordained female)
- 3.) Shramaneras. (male novices in training)
- 4.) Shramanerikas. (female novices in training)
- 5.) Shikshamanas (women called students of the Dharma who have left the home-life and received the six Shikshamana Precepts)
- 6.) Upasakas.(male layperson)
- 7.) Upasikas. .(female layperson)

If a left-home person speaks to people who haven't taken the Precepts of the offenses of the Two-fold Assembly of bhikshus and bhikshunis, that is considered a violation of the Bhikshu and Bhikshuni Precepts. This Bodhisattva Precept, however, prohibits discussing the offenses of both the Bodhisattva *Sanghans* and the Bodhisattva laypeople, that is, of the entire Seven-fold Assembly of the Great Vehicle. This Precept pertains to maintain the Sangha Jewel, so it is a very important Dharma-door. To slander any of the Seven-fold Assembly is considered a major offense.

...Nor may he encourage others to do so, or involve himself in the causes—this means that one has the intent to speak of the offenses of others. The conditions refer to the way in

which one speaks. One may use flowery speech so that what one says sounds very good, but basically one is just discussing the faults of others.

The method refers to what one speaks about. To speak about either the heavy or light offenses of the Seven-fold Assembly to those outside the Assembly is a violation of this Precept. Basically, the violation of any Precept is not something that needs to be known to anyone who has not received the Precepts. If one discusses the offenses of such-and-such a person to one who has not received the Precepts, that is called speaking of the offenses of the Four Assemblies, and such act violates this sixth Major Precept.

...Or, the karma of speaking of the offenses of the Four Assemblies. The “karma” means to have actually spoken. One speaks very clearly about the offenses of another. When the person he speaks to understands what he’s saying, then the karma is created.

Whenever a Bodhisattva hears an evil-hearted externalist or evil exponent of the small vehicles speak of practices which are not in accord with the Dharma and not in accord with the precepts within Buddhism, he would always feel pity for such detractors, instruct them, and lead them to a wholesome belief in the great vehicle. Why are those of the Two Vehicles referred to as “evil” people? It’s because, in this case, the Two Vehicles are attached to their own standards and limitations and doubt the generous capacity of the Great Vehicle. They’re really attached to their own methods and consider themselves alone to be correct. They fail to understand the wonderful function of the Great Vehicle. That’s why the Sutra admonishes them by calling them “evil exponents.” This Precept prohibits speaking of people who have already lost their Precepts because they’ve committed a really major offense and have been cast out of the sea of the Buddhadharma.

If, instead, a Bodhisattva discusses the faults of those within the Buddhadharma, he thereby commits a Bodhisattva *Parajika* Offense.

This Precept is a Precept of the nature as well as a Precept of restraint. Why is that? It is because even according to the civil laws of people one who slanders another person must make a public apology. Since this Precept prohibits a violation of the law, it is known as a Precept of the nature. Within Buddhism, it is a precept of restraint. There are six conditions which must be fulfilled before one has committed a major offense:

- 1.) The person one is talking to is a living being.
- 2.) One knows he is a living being.
- 3.) One has the intent to speak of the offenses.
- 4.) The offenses are actually spoken of.
- 5.) The person one is speaking to hasn’t received the Precepts.
- 6.) The person being spoken to understands what is being said. If the person one is speaking to doesn’t know what is being talked about, it’s not considered an offense. The conditions aren’t met. But, if that person understands fully what one has said, then the sixth condition is met, and the act becomes a major offense.

Xiankuan’s Comment:

This precept is a clear statement that the Sangha is not perfect. The Sangha exists in Samsara, not Nirvana. Therefore, the Sangha and Sangha members have faults. The concern here is that each member should make a strong effort to be compassionate, knowing how difficult it is for there to be perfect harmony all the time. Instead of fomenting trouble by gossiping, or even worse slandering by telling falsehoods, the members adhere to a high standard of being patient

and understanding, providing a safe place for each member to work on their faults and to improve. It is important to not hold the monastics to such a high standard that they are never supposed to have faults. Nor do we look down upon those who are new to the practice and judge them harshly for not knowing how to practice. And for ourselves, we need to be compassionate also, knowing that we will make mistakes, have negativity, and disturb the peace. As we would not condemn our child for erring, so we must not condemn ourselves. In the words of Philo of Alexandria (who was influenced by Pyrrho who learned from the Buddhists during Alexander the Great's journey to Taxila in the Indus Valley): "Be kind, for everyone is fighting a great battle!"

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