

Month 7 of the PARAMITA CHALLENGE – February 2022

Perfection of Skillful Means,
Bodhisattva Precept on Not Praising Oneself, Not Disparaging others,
and continuing with the Ten Practices

Welcome to the Seventh 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 **March, 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.

Six Perfections and their Subdivisions from the
Sutra on Understanding the Profound and Esoteric Doctrine
解深密經 *Jiě shēnmì jīng*

This teaching includes paramitas 1-5 only

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

7	Skill in resorting to appropriate expedients	方便善巧 Fāngbiàn shànqiǎo	Skill in resorting to appropriate expedients is of two kinds 方便善巧有二種: (1) Skill in turning the mind towards <i>Mahadobhi</i> (Supreme Enlightenment); and (2) skill in delivering sentient beings from suffering. 謂迴向方便善巧、拔濟方便善巧。
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Fifty-Two Stages of the Bodhisattva Path

五十二位

wǔshíèr wèi

Xiānkuān Commentary: Practice Number 7 (# 27 in the sequence of 52 Stages) contains the deep and profound teaching: “Great Loving Kindness – No Attachment.” In the Bodhisattva practice, the phrase is: (大慈悲, 無住 dà cíbēi, wúzhù; lit., no abiding). The key is to be able to experience emotions deeply and profoundly, but to transform the negative emotions into loving kindness and compassion at the highest level. However, if one falls into compassion without awareness, then the emotions related to oneself can become overwhelming. The human heartedness becomes too warm and overheats. We burn out! Even fear and negativity toward troublesome people can disturb our equanimity. Our anger too can become too hot, or as we say, hot-headed. Therefore, learning how to let go is very important. However, again, if one detaches without compassion, then one’s heart becomes too cold, which we call cold-hearted. Avoiding these extremes is very important. Through the practice of meditation and mindfulness, keeping this middle way in mind, we can reach this level of great loving kindness-compassion, without attachment.

Ten Practices 十行 shíxíng (stages 21-30)

6	The practice of skillful manifestation	善現行 shànxiàn xíng	We practice purity of thought, word, and deed; as well as non-craving, non-acquisition, and non-clinging
7	The practice of non-attachment	無著行 wúzhū xíng	We practice with minds free from attachment, entering in every successive moment into countless worlds with great loving kindness and compassion.
8	The practice of that which is difficult to attain	難得行 Nán dé xíng	We practice the perfect inconceivable roots of goodness, which are difficult to attain, and having supreme understanding of the Buddha's teaching, which is also difficult to attain
9	The practice of good teachings	善法行 shàn fǎ xíng	We practice with a mind both pure and cool as a reservoir of truth for the sake of beings of all worlds
10	The practice of truth	真實行 Zhēn shí xíng	We practice perfect true speech, and act in accordance with what is said, and speak in accordance with what is done.

58 Bodhisattva Vows			
#	Chinese 菩薩十重戒	Pinyin Púsà shí zhòng jiè	English <u>The Ten Major Bodhisattva Precepts</u>
1	殺戒	Shā jiè	Don't kill
2	盜戒	dào jiè	Don't steal.
3	婬戒	yín jiè	Don't engage in sexual misconduct.
4	妄語戒	wàngyǔ jiè	Don't lie or engage in wrong speech.
5	酤酒戒	gū jiǔ jiè	Don't sell or consume alcoholic beverages or other recreational drugs.
6	說過戒	shuōguò jiè	Don't discuss the faults of the Sangha.
7	自讚毀他戒	zì zàn huǐ tā jiè	Don't praise yourself or disparage others

Commentary on the Fifth Precept
from the Brahma's Net Sutra by Master Hui Seng
The 7th Major Precept

Sutra:

The seventh major precept prohibits praising oneself and disparaging others. A disciple of the Buddha must not praise himself and disparage others, encourage others to do so, or involve himself in the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of praising himself and disparaging others. A Bodhisattva should be willing to stand in for all beings in undergoing slander and insult. He should accept unfortunate situations and let others receive favorable ones. Hence, if the Bodhisattva boasts of his own virtue and conceals the good works of others, thus causing them to be slandered, he thereby commits a Bodhisattva Parajika Offense.

Commentary:

The seventh major precept prohibits praising oneself and disparaging others. A disciple of the Buddha must not praise himself and disparage others. What is meant by "praising oneself?" It means that one lauds one's own merit and virtue. "Disparaging others" means that one discusses the offenses of other people. One brings up one's own long points and discusses the shortcomings of others. Disparaging others can be done through both the written and the spoken word.

If two people get together and show off their good points to each other while exposing the shortcomings of other people, saying how great they themselves are and how bad other people are, and if they are doing this for the sake of name and profit, then this constitutes a major offense. A major offense is a Parajika offense which merits expulsion from the sea of the Buddhadharma.

...Encourage others to do so means that one teaches other people to praise oneself and to slander others. This is also a major offense. Or, one teaches another person to praise himself and slander others. That is a light offense. ...Or involve himself in the causes... The "causes" include greed for profit or reputation and popularity. The conditions include creating all kinds of expedients, facilitating the entire process by finding out a person's shortcomings and discovering things to say against him. The

methods refer to talking about a person's good and bad points; it means talking about rights and wrongs.

...Or Karma of praising himself and disparaging others. The "karma" means that the other person understands what is being said.

This Precept is one of the nature and of restraint. It's a Precept of the nature because it involves a violation of human rights and even the civil law prohibits it. Within Buddhism, it is also a Precept of restraint; that is, one should refrain from such involvement. There are five conditions which constitute a major offense.

- 1.) The person one is speaking to is a living being.
- 2.) One knows that he is a living being.
- 3.) One has the intention to praise oneself and slander others.
- 4.) One has the material to praise oneself and slander others.
- 5.) The person whom one speaks to understands.

What is meant by the intention to praise oneself and to slander others? It means that one wants to expose the shortcomings of the other party, so that name and profit will come to oneself. It is not for the sake of helping subdue the other person for the sake of benefitting him that this is benign done. If one were to admonish the person and say, "You shouldn't be this," and so forth, so as to help him subdue his faults, then that would be different. If one were trying to benefit him by speaking of his offenses, that, too, would be all right. But if one doesn't have either of these motives in mind, then to praise oneself and disparage is pure slander.

The fourth condition above— to have the material to praise oneself and slander others— is further explained as follows:

- 1.) One may bring up another person's social status, whether honorable or lowly.
- 2.) One may refer to another's occupation— his livelihood— as to whether it is noble or base.
- 3.) One may speak of another's skill and profession, as to whether it is superior or inferior.
- 4.) One may discuss another's offenses, as to whether he has them or doesn't have them.
- 5.) One may speak of another's afflictions, as to whether they are light or heavy.
- 6.) One may talk of another's physical characteristics, as to whether they are fine or ugly.