

## **Buddha Dharma Is in Practice**

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Good morning everyone. Welcome to our International Buddha Dharma Society for Cosmic Law.

In spring, we say another year begins and in winter, we say another year ends. Do we remember what happened twenty years ago, ten years ago, one year ago, one month ago, or even a day ago? Most people live muddleheaded and pass their time without knowing what they really want or need. Everything is impermanent. Happy couples may part each other a few years later. Happy family may shatter one day. Wealthy people may live a disturbed life every day. Once a well-known politician may go to jail someday. People try to pursue happiness and satisfy their desires in this world of birth, aging, illness and death, but they don't realize that at the end, all end up empty-handed.

Since everything is impermanent, we should quickly find a refuge. All of us can count ourselves lucky, for we have searched around and finally come to believe in the Buddha. Faith in the Buddha make us feel not alone, safe and have someone to depend on and someone who grabs our hand in this difficult life. But it's just not enough to say that I believe in Buddha.

Believing in Buddha is not to ask Buddha for something like, "Please make mw rich Buddha. Or please give me a child Buddha." Believing in Buddha is not to ask for something, but to follow Buddha, to follow what Buddha has taught, to practice, to cultivate the mind, actions, thoughts, and ultimately to become a Buddha.

Just believing without practicing is like seeing other eat and you don't eat, seeing others walk and you don't walk, seeing others get cured and you are still sick.

Buddha Dharma is in practice. Many people just don't want to or are reluctant to walk the first step to it. So, make the mind and take the first step.

Practicing is a long long process. It takes countless eons to reach perfection. It might need thousands of years just to get rid of one bad habit. And after thousands of years, you might still not change a even bit.

What to practice, how to practice to become a Budhisattva.

Buddha taught us that there are six perfections to practice, which are

1. The perfection of Giving (dana-paramita)

This paramita is the enlightened quality of generosity, charity, giving, and offering. The essence of this paramita is a boundless openness of heart and mind, a selfless generosity and giving which is completely free from attachment and expectation. From the depths of our heart, we practice generously offering compassion, time, energy, and resources to serve the welfare of all beings. Giving is one of the essential preliminary steps of our practice. Our giving should always be unconditional and selfless; completely free of any selfish desire for gratitude, recognition, advantage, reputation, or any wordly reward. The perfection of generosity is not accomplished simply by the action of giving, nor by the actual gift itself. Rather, the true essence of this paramita is our pure motivation of genuine concern for others – the truly generous motivation of the

awakened heart of compassion, wisdom, and love. In addition, our practice of giving should be free of discrimination regarding who is worthy and who is unworthy to receive. To cultivate the paramita of generosity, it is wise to contemplate the enormous benefits of this practice, the disadvantages of being miserly, as well as the obvious fact that our body and our wealth are impermanent. With this in mind, we will certainly be encouraged to use both our body and wealth to practice generosity while we still have them. Generosity is a cure for the afflictions of greed, miserliness, and possessiveness. In this practice of giving, we may offer our time, energy, money, food, clothing, or gifts so as to assist others. To the best of our ability, we may offer the priceless treasure of Dharma instruction, giving explanations on the Buddha's teaching. This offering serves to free others from misperceptions that cause confusion, pain, and suffering. We can offer fearless giving and protection by delivering living beings (insects, animals, and people) from harm, distress, fear, and terror. In this way, we offer care and comfort, helping others to feel safe and peaceful. We do this selflessly, without counting the cost to ourselves. We practice the perfection of generosity in an especially powerful way when we embrace all living being continually in the radiant love of our heart.

## **2. The perfection of Morality (sila-paramita)**

This paramita is the enlightened quality of virtuous and ethical behaviour, morality, self-discipline, impeccability, personal integrity, honour, and harmlessness. The essence of this paramita is that through our love and

compassion we do not harm others; we are virtuous and harmless in our thoughts, speech and actions. This practice of ethical conduct is the very foundation for progressing in any practice of meditation and for attaining all higher realisations on the path. Our practice of generosity must always be supported by our practice of ethics; this ensures the lasting results of our generosity. We should perfect our conduct by eliminating harmful behaviour. We abstain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, divisive speech, harsh speech, gossip, greed, malice and wrong views. Following these precepts or guidelines is not meant to be a burden or a restriction of our freedom. We follow these precepts so we can enjoy greater freedom, happiness and security in our lives, because through our virtuous behaviour we are no longer creating suffering for ourselves and others. We must realise that unethical behaviour is always the cause of suffering and unhappiness. If we give even the slightest consideration to the advantages of cultivating ethical behaviour and the disadvantages of unethical behaviour, we will certainly develop great enthusiasm for this practice of ethics. Practicing the perfection of ethics, we are free of negativity, we cause no harm to others by our actions, our speech is kind and compassionate, and our thoughts are free of anger, malice and wrong views. When our commitment is strong in the practice of ethics we are at ease, naturally confident, without stress and happy because we are not carrying any underlying sense of guilt or remorse for our actions; we have nothing to hide. Maintaining our personal honour and integrity, our moral impeccability, this is

the cause of all goodness, happiness and even the attainment of enlightenment.

### 3. The perfection of Patient Endurance (ksanti-paramita)

This paramita is the enlightened quality of patience, tolerance, forbearance, and acceptance. The essence of this paramita of patience is the strength of mind and heart that enables us to face the challenges and difficulties of life without losing our composure and inner tranquillity. We embrace and forbear adversity, insult, distress and the wrongs of others with patience and tolerance, free of resentment, irritation, emotional reactivity, or retaliation. We cultivate the ability to be loving and compassionate in the face of criticism, misunderstanding, or aggression. With this enlightened quality of patience, we are neither elated by praise, prosperity, or agreeable circumstances nor are we angry, unhappy or depressed when faced with insult, challenge, hardship or poverty. This enlightened attribute of patience, acceptance and tolerance is not a forced suppression or denial of our thoughts and feelings. Rather, it is a quality of being which comes from having our heart open and our mind deeply concentrated upon the Dharma. In this way, we have a clear and correct understanding of impermanence, of cause and effect (karma), and with strong determination and patience we remain in harmony with this understanding for the benefit of all beings. The ability to endure, to have forbearance, is integral to our Dharma practice. Without this kind of patience, we cannot accomplish anything. A true Bodhisattva practices patience in such a way that even when we are hurt physically, emotionally, or mentally by others, we are not irritated or resentful. We always make an effort to see the goodness and beauty in others. In

practicing this perfection of patience and forbearance, we never give up on an abandon others – we help them cross over the sea of suffering. We maintain our inner peace, calmness, and equanimity under all circumstances, having enduring patience and tolerance for ourselves and others. With the strength of patience, we maintain our effort and enthusiasm in our Dharma practice. Therefore, our practice of patience assists us in developing the next paramita of effort and enthusiastic perseverance.

#### 4. The perfection of diligence (virya-paramita)

This paramita is the enlightened quality of energy, vigour, vitality, endurance, diligence, enthusiasm, continuous, persistent effort. In order to practice the first three paramitas of generosity, virtuous conduct, and patience in the face of difficulties, we need this paramita of effort and perseverance. Persistent effort makes the previous paramitas increase and become even more powerful influences in our life. The essence of this paramita of effort is the courage, energy, and endurance to continuously practice the Dharma and pursue the supreme goal of enlightenment for the highest good of all beings. From a feeling of deep compassion for the suffering of all sentient beings, we are urged to unflinching, persistent, and joyous effort. We use our body, speech, and mind to work ceaselessly and untiringly for the benefit of others, with no expectations for personal recognition or reward. We are always ready to serve others to the best of our ability. With right effort, devoted energy, and the power of sustained application, we practice the Dharma without getting sidetracked by anything or failing under the

influence of laziness. Without developing Virya Paramita, we can become easily disillusioned and drop our practice when we meet with adverse conditions. The word virya means persistence and perseverance in the face of disillusionment, energetically striving to attain the supreme goal of enlightenment. When we cultivate this type of diligence and perseverance we have a strong and healthy mind. We practice with persistent effort and enthusiasm because we realise the tremendous value and benefit of our Dharma practice. Firmly establishing ourselves in this paramita, we also develop self-reliance, and this becomes one of our most prominent characteristics. With right effort and enthusiastic perseverance, we regard failure as simply another step toward success, danger as an inspiration for courage, and affliction as another opportunity to practice wisdom and compassion. To develop strength of character, self-reliance, and the next paramita of concentration, is not an easy achievement, thus we need enthusiastic perseverance on the path.

## **5. The perfection of Meditation (dhyana-paramita)**

This paramita is the enlightened quality of awareness, concentration, meditation, contemplation, mindfulness, mental stability. Our minds have the tendency to be very distracted and restless, always moving from one thought or feeling to another. Because of this, our attention stays fixated in the ego, in the surface layers of the mind and emotions, and we just keep engaging in the same habitual patterns of behaviour. The perfection of concentration means training our mind so that it does what we want it to do. We stabilise our mind and emotions by practicing meditation,

by being mindful and aware in everything we do. When we train the mind in this way, physical, emotional, and mental vacillations and restlessness are eliminated. We achieve focus, composure, and tranquillity. This ability to concentrate and focus the mind brings clarity, equanimity, illumination. Concentration allows the deep insight needed to transform the habitual misperceptions and attachments that cause confusion and suffering. As we eliminate these misperceptions and attachments, we can directly experience the joy, compassion, and wisdom of our true nature. There is no attainment of wisdom and enlightenment without developing the mind through concentration and meditation. This development of concentration requires perseverance. Thus the previous paramita of effort and perseverance brings us to this paramita of concentration. In addition, when there is no practice of meditation and concentration, we cannot achieve the other paramitas, because their essence, which is the inner awareness that comes from meditation, is lacking. To attain wisdom, compassion, and enlightenment, it is essential that we develop the mind through concentration, meditation, and mindfulness.

## **6. The perfection of wisdom (prajna-paramita)**

This paramita is the enlightened quality of transcendental wisdom, insight, and the perfection of understanding. The essence of this paramita is the supreme wisdom, the highest understanding that living beings can attain – beyond words and completely free from the limitation of mere ideas, concepts, or intellectual knowledge. Beyond the limited confines of intellectual and conceptual states of



mind, we experience the awakened heart-mind of wisdom and compassion – prajna paramita. Prajna paramita is the supreme wisdom (prajna) that knows emptiness (shunyata) and the interconnectedness of all things. This flawless wisdom eliminates all false and distorted views of the absolute. We see the essential nature of reality with utmost clarity; our perception goes beyond the illusive and deceptive veils of material existence. With the perfection of wisdom, we develop the ability to recognise the truth behind the temporary display of all appearances. Prajna paramita is a result of contemplation, meditation, and rightly understanding the nature of reality. Ultimately, the full realisation of prajna paramita is that we are not simply a separate self trying to do good. Rather, virtuously serving the welfare of all beings is simply a natural expression of the awakening heart. We realise that the one serving, the one being served, and the compassionate action of service, are all the same totality – there is no separate ego or self to be found in any of these. With this supreme wisdom, we go beyond acceptance and rejection, hope and fear, dualistic thoughts, and ego-clinging. We completely dissolve all these notions, realising everything as a transparent display of the primordial truth. If our ego is attached even to the disciplines of these paramitas, this is incorrect perception and we are merely going from one extreme to another. In order to free ourselves from these extremes, we must release our ego attachment and dissolve all dualistic concepts with the insight of supreme wisdom. This wisdom transforms the other five paramitas into their transcendental state as well. Only the illumination of supreme wisdom makes this possible.

The six perfections are the path to cross over the sea of suffering to the shore of happiness and awakening. By practicing these six perfections, we cross over the ignorance and delusion to reach enlightenment.

Each of the six paramitas is an enlightened quality of the heart. They are the essence of our true nature. They are what we are originally. Due to our delusion, ego, discrimination, attachment, karma, they are covered and hidden. To practice is to reveal our original nature, to find our true self.

Practicing is a long process. At the beginning, you may be confused and do not know where to start? Where to start to practice. As Master said, "Hold the five precepts; chant the name of Buddha; recite sutras and mantras." At the beginning, you might not know what you are doing. Just do it. Like the baby learns to walk. Just walk. And gradually you will know more and more. Your world will be expanded and become clearer and clearer.

At the beginning of the practice, the mind may be scattered, attracted and attached to outside world. You may also be depressed by your life. Gradually, you will concentrate and collect your mind together, be free from what is happening around you. You become an observer. Gradually you gain Samadhi power and also gain wisdom. When I say gradually, it might still take years to see it. It would be great to have a master to guide you and inspire your wisdom.

The basic of practicing is practicing Morality.

We should personally practice, always hanging the words "birth" and "death" on our

brows, and putting the word “morality” beneath our feet. Maybe that's hard to understand— why should we put the word “morality” under our feet? Because “morality” is a person's foundation. It's to us as roots to a tree. Once we have “morality”, we can stand on our own feet. If no ground under our feet, we have no place to stand. If we can actually practice “morality”, then we can establish a good character and naturally be successful in whatever we do. So it's said, “Morality is the foundation of a person.” The Analects of Confucius also say, “The superior person attends to the root. Once the root is established, the Way comes forth.” Only when the fundamentals are attended to can the Way come forth. This is a wise advice from the ancients. As the Master always reminds us, “Great virtues carry great luck. Cultivate your virtues, and you may make a steady progress in the practicing of Buddha Dharma.”

Virtuous conduct begins in small places. "Do not think a good deed is too small and fail to do it." Don't wait around for a big good deed to do, because there aren't that many big good deeds. A mountain is an accumulation of specks of dust. Although each speck is tiny, many specks piled up can form a mountain. Virtuous deeds may be small, yet when many are accumulated, they will form a mountain of virtues.

In everyone's life, there are many chances to pick up treasures to become rich. These are chances to practice the six perfections, such as to help others by giving money, time, care, even a hug or a smile, or to study diligently, or to endure difficulty situations, etc. Giving is obtaining. Giving more and more means one gets richer and richer. Of course, this rich does not mean money, but something reflected inside.

Not going against what is proper and right is known as a moral conduct. Not hindering others is morality. In whatever you do, you should make it your obligation to help others. If you hinder others and cannot benefit them in terms of profit, time, culture, wisdom, or any other aspects, you are acting contrary to morality. Therefore, in every move and action, every word and deed, we should always make "not going against morality" as our basic rule. If you want to cultivate the Way, you must first foster virtue. Without virtuous conduct, you cannot cultivate. Some people who want to cultivate encounters demonic obstacles as soon as they start. That is due to lack of morality. So it is said, "Morality is fundamental. Wealth is incidental."

As mentioned earlier, the days pass as swiftly as a flying arrow, but we don't notice it. As for the days gone by, just let them go. Only the future is worth pursuing. We should set guidelines for the future, so we won't let the time pass in a muddle.

We should be mindful of the Bodhisattva; it's not that the Bodhisattva should be mindful of us. Why don't we want the Bodhisattva to be mindful of us? If you are sitting here with a lot of idle thoughts, the Bodhisattva of Great Kindness and Compassion will certainly take pity on you, this poor living being, and be worried because you are not able to sincerely participate a simple short Dharma talk. Therefore, everyone should earnestly and sincerely recite, and go a step further by nurturing kindness, compassion, joy, and renunciation in your mind. If you can do that, then I guarantee that the Buddha will aid and support you.

Besides, why I always say that the Buddha dharma is in Practice, not in talking.

Because our mouth is a high risk organ of our body, it is so easy to create karma by gossip, by judging someone, by harsh speech, by talking about others' rights and wrongs, by constantly telling lies, saying indecent things, scolding people, backbiting, and so on. There are some people who don't seem to be able to survive for even a day without gossiping. If they don't tell lies for a day, they feel as uncomfortable as if they hadn't eaten. All day long, they need to gossip and lie in order to survive. Wouldn't you say that's strange? It's really hard to figure them out. I am so curious that you spend your whole life in a muddle, born drunk and dying in a dream, and not cultivating the least bit of merit and virtue, how can you become a Buddha?

Each of you should think for a moment: in the past, the Buddha had to cultivate limitless and boundless merits and virtues before he could become a Buddha.

Why haven't we become Buddhas? It's because we haven't cultivated limitless and boundless merits and virtues. Our merit and virtue are far less, because we cultivate on one hand and create karma on the other. So it is said, "What we cultivate is not as much as what we create."

Therefore, I would like to end my speech with an paragraph from the 8 Great Awakenings Sutra, The Fifth Awakening: Stupidity and ignorance are the cause of death and rebirth. Bodhisattvas apply themselves and study and listen broadly, constantly striving to expand their wisdom and refine their eloquence. Nothing brings them greater joy than teaching and transforming living beings.

Remember, study and listen broadly; strive to expand your wisdom constantly; practice

without gossiping! Thank you for listening.