

# **8. Training in the Mahayana Precepts and Perfections**

## **How to train in the Mahayana in general**

### **1. Establishing the desire to learn the precepts of the spirit of enlightenment**

First understand the precepts well, and then after you have trained in them, if you have enthusiasm for taking them, you are given the vows.

### **2. Taking the vows of the conqueror's children after establishing the desire to learn the precepts**

How to take the vows and how to guard against fundamental transgressions are explained in the Bodhisattva levels chapter on ethical discipline

### **3. How to train after taking the vows**

All the precepts are included within the 6 perfections. The 6 perfections are thus the great condensation of the Bodhisattva path

#### **a. The Fixed Number of Perfections Based on High Status**

In order to have a perfect rebirth you need to have practiced all 6 perfections.

1. generosity - resources to use
2. ethical discipline - a body with which to act
3. patience - companions together with whom you act
4. joyous perseverance - work that you are able to accomplish once you have undertaken
5. concentration - must not fall under the control of the afflictions that could be caused by the previous 4
6. wisdom - must distinguish well in what to adopt and what to cast aside

Strive to produce these 6 in future lives.

#### **b. The Fixed Number of Perfections Based on Fulfilling the 2 aims**

`Those who strive for the aims of beings  
Work at giving, non-harm, and patience;  
And completely fulfill their own aims  
With stabilization, and liberations, together with their basis.

The Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras

### c. The Fixed Number of Perfections Based on perfecting the complete fulfillment of others aims

`Through relieving others poverty, not harming them, Being patient with their harm, not being dispirited with what they do,  
Delighting them, and speaking well to them  
You fulfill others' aims, which fulfills your own.

The Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras

### ### d. The Fixed Number of Perfections Based on their subsuming the entire Mahayana

`The entire Mahayana is summed up in  
Not delighting in resources,  
Reverence, not being dispirited in two ways,  
And the yogis free of discursiveness

The Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras

### e. The Fixed Number of Perfections in terms of the completeness of paths or methods

1. generosity - not being attached to the resources that are your possessions is generosity, because you become free from attachment to your things by becoming habituated to giving them away
2. ethical discipline - the method for restraining yourself from the distraction of trying to possess what you do not possess is ethical discipline, for when you maintain a monk's

vows, you do not have all the distractions of making a living

3. patience - method for not abandoning living beings, because you do not despair at the suffering caused by the harm others inflict
4. joyous perseverance - the method to increase virtues, because you increase them when you joyously persevere at what you undertake
5. concentration - clears away obscurations through clearing away afflictions
6. wisdom - clears away cognitive obscurations

In order to avoid being dominated by the distraction of sensual objects, you need generosity that is free from attachment. etc... with all the rest

## **e. The Fixed Number of Perfections based on the three trainings**

**Ethical disciple** is ethical discipline. A pre-requisite to ethical disciple is **generosity** because once you are indifferent to resources you can properly adopt an ethical discipline. **Patience** safeguards your ethical discipline through not retaliating, etc.

**Meditative stabilization** is concentration. **Wisdom** is wisdom.

**Joyous Perseverance** is included in all three trainings. — There are 2 causes of not initially transcending or rising above cyclic existence — attachment to resources and attachment to a home. The remedies for these are generosity and ethical discipline respectively.

You could rise above these for a time, but fall back. There are 2 causes for this — suffering from the wrongdoing of living beings and becoming dispirited at the length of time you pursue virtue. The remedies for these are patience and joyous perseverance.

**Once you sustain a disregard for all suffering and harm, as well as an enthusiasm which views even an eternity as though it were only a day, you must practice them in various ways. If you can do this, they will function as remedies to what causes you to turn back.. thus, they are extremely crucial**

Never mind the bodhisattva deeds, but even with slight virtue, there are many who start out, but few who do not turn back after a while because: 1. Their forbearance for the slightest hardship is tiny 2. their enthusiasm for the path they cultivate is tepid

There are 2 causes for letting your virtue go to waste even if you do not turn back after a while — distraction, wherein your attention does not stabilize on a virtuous object, and faulty wisdom.

Concentration is a remedy because it is said that even virtuous practices such as recitations and mantras are senseless if your attention wanders.

Wisdom is a remedy because if you fail to develop the wisdom that fully delineates the topics and collections of Buddhist knowledge, you will be mistaken about what to adopt and what to reject, and you will conduct yourself wrongly.

**The 6 perfections are the foundation of achieving every quality of a buddha.**

This because the first 4 perfections are preconditions to meditative concentration. Then when you cultivate insight based on this, you will know reality.

It is extremely crucial to gain conviction about the 6 perfections.

## **The order of arising**

When you have a **generosity** that is disinterested in and unattached to resources, you take up **ethical discipline**. When you have an **ethical discipline** which restrains you from wrongdoing, you become **patient** with those who harm you. When you have the patience wherein you do not become dispirited with hardships, the conditions for rejecting virtue are few, you are able to **persevere joyously**. Once you **persevere joyously** day and night, you will produce the **meditative concentration** that facilitates the application of your attention to virtuous objects of meditation. When your mind is in equipoise, you will **know reality exactly**.

### **Each preceding perfection is inferior to the superior one that follows it**

Each preceding perfection is easier than the subsequent one to engage in and perform, so its is coarser than the subsequent one.

Because of their coarseness and subtlety, The perfections are taught in order.