


Course 2: Buddhist Refuge
Level 1 of the Perfection of Wisdom



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The banner features a close-up of a Buddha's face on the left. The text is centered on a black background. The logo is a stylized flame.

Course Format

- Ten Classes
- Related Readings
- Ten Homeworks
- Ten Meditation Assignments
- Online Discussions
- Ten Quizzes
- Comprehensive Final

Monks Debating at Sera Monastery



A photograph showing a group of Buddhist monks in maroon robes sitting on the ground in a courtyard, engaged in a debate. Some are gesturing while others listen.

Course Outline

- Background on the perfection of wisdom
- The three kinds of refuge
- The wish for enlightenment (bodhichitta)
- What is nirvana?
- The object we deny
- The proofs for emptiness
- Who is Maitreya?

Class 1:
The Perfection of Wisdom
 The Perfection of Wisdom
 The Three Jewels
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Class Objectives

- Give the 'technical' definition of perfection of wisdom
- Give the "lineage" of the book we are studying.
 - Name the books, authors and dates for:
 - The Perfection of Wisdom Sutras
 - The famous commentary: Ornament of Realization
 - The Clarification
 - The Analysis of the Perfection of Wisdom
- List the three levels of the perfection of wisdom
- Define refuge and ultimate refuge
- List and define the three jewels

The Root Text

- Perfection of Wisdom Sutras (*Prajna Paramita*)
- Spoken by Shakyamuni Buddha
- Three main sutras:
 - long (100,000 lines)
 - middle (20,000 lines)
 - short (8,000 lines)
- Collectively they are called “mother” (*Yum*) because they are the mother of all buddhas



Commentaries on the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras

The Ornament of Realizations

By Master Asanga (~350 AD)
as dictated by Maitreya (the future buddha)

Really 50 pages of “code”, so we have a commentary on the Ornament...



Master Asanga

Commentaries

- **Clarification** by Haribhadra (850 AD)
 - Also hard to understand
 - Je Tsongkapa also wrote a difficult to understand commentary
 - We will use:
 - Analysis of the Perfection of Wisdom**
 - by Kedrup Tempa Darge (1493-1568)
 - from Sera Mey Monestary
- This is the monastic textbook.

What is Prajnaparamita?

- The **perfection of wisdom** (prajnaparmamita) is the perception of emptiness under the influence of the desire to help all sentient beings.
- **Bodhichitta** is the desire to become a Buddha for the benefit of all sentient beings.
- A **bodhisattva** is someone that has true bodhichitta.

Some related definitions...

- **Arya** is someone that has experienced the direct perception of emptiness
- **Arhant** is someone that has reached nirvana
- **Nirvana** is the permanent cessation of mental afflictions, in their entirety, due to one's 'individual analysis' (*of the four arya truths*)

**Three 'levels' of
Perfection of Wisdom**

- Perfection of wisdom of the path
– a bodhisattva arya
- Perfection of wisdom of the result
– a buddha (sees deceptive and ultimate reality at the same time)
- The teachings and books about the perfection of wisdom
– the sounds of the words of the Buddha

Buddhist Refuge

'Ingredients' for taking Refuge

- 1. Danger**
- 2. Protection**

'Ingredients' in Buddhist Refuge

1. **Fear** of suffering – wanting protection
 - fear of lower realms
 - fear of suffering inherent in higher births

2. **Belief** that Buddhism can help or protect you
 - specifically the Three Jewels

Buddhist Refuge The Three Jewels

- Realization that nothing in this world can help you from suffering – renunciation.
- Turning to the only things that can protect you from suffering.



Buddha Jewel



The Buddha Jewel is that ultimate place of refuge, the one which has completely satisfied both the needs.



Dharma Jewel



- Dharma is the teachings of the Buddha
 - Books and words
 - The realizations (paths or ideas) in the hearts (mindstreams) of people
- The **Dharma Jewel** is the enlightened side of truth, either in the form of a cessation or in the form of a path or both.



Master Culadasa

Sangha Jewel



- The Sangha Jewel is a realized being who possesses any number of the eight fine qualities of knowledge and liberation.
- The Sangha Jewel is anyone that has perceived emptiness directly.
 - arya
 - arhant
 - buddha



Geshe Michael Roach

Ultimate & Apparent Refuge

- Ultimate refuge is any refuge where the journey along the path has reached its final goal.
 - A buddha or something about a buddha
- Apparent refuge is any refuge where the journey along the path has not reached its final goal.

Homework #1

- Find the qualities of the Buddha Jewel in the reading.
- Memorization: memorize the definition of the Buddha Jewel and the Dharma Jewel
- Meditation: Fifteen minutes each day contemplate what each of the three jewels really are. *(Remember to record date and time of meditation.)*
