

Wondrous Dharma

Wondrous Dharma is the newsletter on the dharma events at the premise of the International Translation Institute, 1777 Murchison Drive, Burlingame, CA 94010 Telephone (650) 692-5912 E-mail wondrousdharma@gmail.com

Weekly lecture on the Vajra Prajna Paramita Sutra:

- Fridays 7:45pm to 8:45pm
- At International Translation Institute, Burlingame.
- Open to the public

Individual Highlights:

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Eat, breathe and think prajna-wisdom

Shakyamuni Buddha spoke for 49 years. The prajna teachings were spoken for 22 years before revealing the final lotus-flower nirvana teachings. Because the prajna teachings were taught towards the end and it took 22 years to do so reveals its importance and profundity. Though the principle of prajna is profound and even though it was spoken more than 3,000 years ago, it continues to be relevant in

today's society.

The emphasis of this Sutra lecture series will be to explain the day-to-day application of prajna principles with specific case studies. It is true that when we plant blessings, we will receive the reward of peace and happiness but this is short-lived because we remain in the Three Realms. Creating blessings without supplementing wisdom is simply prolonging our

agony.

Lasting peace and happiness comes when practicing blessings and prajna-wisdom lifetime after lifetime. Our teacher, the Buddha is doubly complete in blessings and wisdom. Wisdom is the mind unattached.

Eat, breathe, and think prajna-wisdom! **The next Sutra lecture will focus on 'A Synopsis of the Vajra Sutra'.**

Important to study; everything is made from the mind

When Great Master Patriarch Bodhidharma brought the Buddha-dharma to China, he taught Chan. When Venerable Master Hsuan Hua came to the US, he spoke and explained a lot of teachings though he is a Patriarch of a Chan lineage. Why is this? It is because in China then, Buddhaharma was spoken but the Chinese people did not practice whereas today, the Buddhaharma has only just arrived in US.

During the first thousand

years after the Buddha's nirvana, people had good roots. The next thousand-year people were strong in Chan or practice while the next thousand-year people were strong in studies and finally we see a lot of fighting today. Turning around requires studies and then practice.

Venerable Elder Master Xu Yun was born covered in a caul indicating that he was at least an Eighth stage Bodhisattva. Because he couldn't answer questions by a Chan practitioner, thus

began his studies. It is for this reason when he lectured; he exhorted practitioners to know the path before they practice.

Even the Great Master 6th Patriarch though he was illiterate still has to study when the Great Master 5th Patriarch taught him the Vajra Sutra. Only then did the Great Master become greatly awakened after knowing that everything is made from the mind; essentially this being the crux of the teaching of the Vajra Sutra and also the Avatamsaka Sutra!

The Buddha's samadhi and wisdom is equal and perfect.

Samadhi Light Buddha embodies concentration, wisdom, precepts

February 19, the first day of the Sutra lecture series coincided with the birthday of Samadhi Light Buddha. Samadhi is proper concentration that focuses to turn the light inwards. Light connotes prajna-wisdom to be able to see the principle. The name of Samadhi Light Buddha therefore tells us the balanced practice of calming of the mind and wisdom. Within samadhi is

wisdom and vice versa. The Maha-parinirvana Sutra says that Arhats are strong in samadhi but unable to comprehend the wisdom of seeing-the-nature. Bodhisattvas comprehend seeing-the-nature; though not perfectly. The Buddha's samadhi and wisdom is equal and perfect.

What about precepts being the third of the Three Non-outflow

studies? The name Buddha embodies precepts because the precept is the teacher when the Buddha has entered parinirvana.

Another way to explain is without precepts there would be no proper concentration and a wise person upholds the precepts. Precept is therefore implicit in Samadhi Light.

From understanding prajna-wisdom to accepting it

The question is: "How do we progress from contemplative prajna to true appearance prajna?"

Prajna carries three meanings: literary, contemplative and true appearance prajna. The initial literary prajna is medicine in the world of ignorance; acknowledging the existence of phenomena. The final literary teaching tells us that the cause of existence of phenomena has no cause in the first place. From nothingness comes sense awareness of phenomena.

Contemplative prajna thus

contemplates phenomena as empty or non-existent. True appearance prajna is when phenomena are perceived as neither non-existent nor existent.

The question is: "**How do we progress from contemplative prajna to true appearance prajna?**" First know what constitutes contemplative and true appearance prajna in our daily lives, then we conduct ourselves according to our understanding until it

becomes a natural part of us; we then eventually become united with our Buddha-nature.

Do we know: What is true appearance bowing? What is true appearance repentance? How do we conduct ourselves in our daily lives in school and in office? And so on...

The Sutra Lecture will delve into the foregoing questions on contemplative and true appearance prajna.

As the 'mad' mind ceases, prajna-wisdom arises

When I was small, I remembered whilst reading a book of animals, my cousin used to say, "I like this animal; I don't like that animal." Since he has his preference, "I also like this animal and I like that animal." This is the

earliest memorable instant of discrimination giving rise to ego. But then, my cousin would retort, "You cannot choose this animal because I have already chosen it." Ego gives rise to boundaries. Hence the Shurangama Sutra says

that only when boundaries are broken at the 10th Transference can there be a chance for awakening.

Good knowing ones, now do you know why the Venerable Elder Master urges us to cease the mad mind – the discriminating mind is the obstacle to prajna-wisdom.

Eureka ! These 3 figurines speaks prajna-wisdom...

When I was looking for a way to express prajna-wisdom, I came across these 3 figurines in one of the rooms. "Right on! This is prajna-wisdom."

The Buddha in the Shurangama assembly says that the source of ignorance is the sense organs and the source of awakening is also the sense organs. Turn the light around! We live in an illusory world built by ignorance or karma.

Earlier we said that the source of ignorance is our discriminating mind. Because we have not

ended our discriminating mind, it is best to talk less. Venerable Master Hsuan Hua has this advice, "Precepts is to be careful in talking, samadhi is the practice of meditation and wisdom is the practice of lecture."

The Great Master 6th Patriarch left this last verse just before he entered stillness:

Firm, firm: Do not practice the good

High, high: Do not do evil

Still, still: Cut off sight and sound

Vast, vast: The mind unattached

'Do not practice good' means do not be attached to your good deeds. Cut off sight and sound as expressed in the figurines means to turn the light around and not pursue the 5 external sense objects. The discriminating mind has boundaries and therefore would not be vast. When boundaries are destroyed, the mind is free like empty space; being truly vast and unattached. When the five sense organs no longer grasp the externals and the discriminating mind ceases, this is prajna-wisdom. Maha-prajna-paramita!



Eureka ! These three figurines above express prajna-wisdom.

Daily ceremonies, meditation, informal discussion

Those interested in participating in the following daily ceremonies are welcome:

Meal offering: 10:30am to 10:45 am.

Great Compassion Repentance: from 12:30pm to 1:30pm

Evening ceremony presently from 6:00pm to 7:20pm

Please call before you come over so that preparations can be made.

Weekly Chan meditation session for beginners providing both basic guidelines and instructions and practice Saturdays 2pm to 3pm

Informal discussion on Buddhism in general or Buddhism 101 suitable for beginners or those curious Wednesdays 7:30pm to 8:30pm.

"Those interested in participating..... Please call before you come over so that preparations can be made."