

The Armor of Fearlessness

A Paramita Contemplation Practice

The virtues are many and interlaced, but they all have the same essence, authentic presence. When we train in the virtues, we develop a reservoir of merit and are enriched: to study the virtues, one becomes wise and discerning; to practice the virtues, one becomes gentle and flexible; to be virtuous is to be strong and enlivened. Practicing the virtues we transcend the ego, and in egolessness the virtues themselves are transcendent. I will rouse windhorse and be authentically present in harmony with nature and the elements by studying, practicing, and embodying virtue.

Generosity (Skt. *Dana*) - Charity, Hospitality, Sharing, Grace, Acceptance, Gratitude, Appreciation, Letting Go, Forgiveness

Generosity is the virtue that produces peace. Like a limitless treasure, nothing is lost by sharing. Like a child holding onto the rope long after the tug of war game is over, we can now release the rope. True generosity is the willingness to let go, let be, and let come without expectation of result. Letting go of the attachment to things, people, concepts, expectations, and outcomes allows simplicity, curiosity, and creativity to blossom. Accepting what is given and what is allows gratitude and appreciation to take root. With generosity, we gather the merit that leads to liberation. With generosity, we take care of ourselves and each other by creating a sense of openness, manners, and a culture of service. With generosity, we acknowledge the web of interdependent factors leading to harm, protect all beings from harm and fear, and heal turmoil by giving the grace of forgiveness. Transcendent generosity is without any thought of self. I commit to being generous with my time, possessions, and talents; my love, protection, and care; and with the Dharma.

Loving-Kindness (Skt. *Maitri*) - Friendliness, Compassion, Gentleness, Goodwill, Benevolence, Love, Mercy, Protection

Loving-kindness is the virtue that produces care. Like a campfire, loving-kindness is the natural warmth that gathers us. Like a good parent, loving-kindness is the protective yet encouraging open presence allowing the child to play. True loving-kindness is a basic and fundamental love and friendliness for ourselves, others, and all beings, even those who have caused harm. Friendliness and goodwill heal fractures by incorporating the wanted and unwanted parts in a whole. Mindfulness and protection keep all beings safe by not allowing ourselves or others to cause harm or to be harmed. With gentleness we elevate society. With mercy we never give up on anyone. With compassion we enter the fire of suffering, allowing ourselves to be consumed. Transcendent loving-kindness is unconditional. With the four immeasurables as my guide, I commit to cultivating this natural love and basic kindness sharing them with all.

Truth (Skt. *Satya*) - Real, Reality, Nature, Honest, Balance, Equality, Justice, Authentic, Genuine

Truth is the virtue that produces harmony. Like turning on the lights in a dark room, we can now see. Like the earth below and sky above, we don't confuse the two. True reality shows itself constantly beyond our desire for things to be different than how they are. Deeply listening and observing, truth is revealed in the body, speech, and mind. In authentic presence, the body and mind are synchronized and the world is as it is. Being attuned, we discover the natural hierarchy, order, and unfolding of the cosmos. With reality, delusions and distortions fall away. With honesty and equality, we untangle knots and clear stuck places allowing energy to flow openly. With balance, the just restore and maintain health and healing. Transcendent truth is indisputable. Whether within myself or in the world, I commit to being here and now aligning with reality, and therefore, being authentic and genuine.

Discipline (Skt. *Shila*) - Ethic, Moral, Character, Conduct, Humility, Rule, Order, Precision

Discipline is the virtue that produces discernment, knowing what to cultivate and what to abandon. Like a narrow mountain pass along a steep cliff, keeping true prevents disaster. Like ripples in a pond, the conduct of our body, speech, and mind reverberates creating the mind we will have and the world we and future generations will live in. True discipline is taking the reins of our mind and aligning our life with natural rule and order. Each action, word, and thought become the basis of perceptions and habits. In turn, perceptions and habits become our way of acting, speaking, and thinking. With conduct, we adhere to the path. Without the extremes of a heavy hand or a lax temperament, we practice the arts of not too tight / not too loose and tightening the tight / loosening the loose. With precision, we are humble and refined in our views and actions. Transcendent discipline is doubtless. Knowing this to be true, I will cultivate virtue while abandoning non-virtue.

Exertion (Skt. *Virya*) - Energy, Enthusiasm, Effort, Perseverance, Endurance, Motivation, Diligence, Vigor, Zeal, Intention

Exertion is the virtue that produces true joy. Like embarking on a journey of a thousand miles, the path is the goal. Like a person with their hair on fire, we are one-pointed in our search. True exertion is joyful effort and selfless devotion. Constantly aware that death is waiting behind each moment, we don't hesitate for even an instant. Truly knowing the suffering of samsara and inescapability of karma, we vigorously turn away from the habits of mind which entraps us. Embracing our precious opportunity and having the supreme motivation of being of benefit, we unlock the path of liberation for ourselves and all beings. With intention we direct our body, speech and mind in line with the dharma. With endurance we work for the benefit of all for as long as it takes. With diligence we do not fall into the laziness that causes depression: comfort, distraction, and disheartenment. Transcendent exertion is inexhaustible. Implementing the four methods of overcoming laziness - aspiration, effort, joy, and rest, I commit to enthusiastically engage life and travel the path of awakening working for the benefit of all beings.

Patience (Skt. *Kshanti*) - Restraint, Tolerance, Forbearance, Temperance, Perseverance, Endurance, Steadfastness, Acceptance, Forgiveness, Non-Violence, Flexibility

Patience is the virtue that produces non-aggression. Like a shield in battle, we prevent grave danger. Like watching a pot come to a boil, time is all that is needed. True patience relies on the knowledge of when to persevere and when to refrain from the activity of body, speech, and mind. Without reaching for the relief of suppression or indulgence, we bear the intolerable. Becoming acquainted with small harms to ego allows one to tolerate greater harms to ego. Untangling the hold of control, desire, expectations, hatred, and anger, patience moves towards peace even in the face of many obstacles. With patience, we do not fall into the lower realms. With patience, change is inevitable. With patience, the mind and outcome are flexible. Transcendent patience is unlimited. I commit to let go of the aggression of ego, and know true acceptance.

Courage (Skt. *Saurya*) - Bravery, Fortitude, Determination, Will, Spirit, Vow, Aspiration, Faith, Loyalty, Belief, Confidence, Heart, Power

Courage is the virtue that produces liberation. Like facing the monster under our bed, we are willing to be eaten. Like setting sail for distant shores, having faith in the wind and basics of navigation we chart our course. True courage is not being without fear, but becoming intimate with fear. Not caught in the trap of hesitation and doubt, with resolve and heart we are willing to face the dissolution of ego and the groundlessness of the present moment without reaching for the familiar and safe. This faith produces strength, nobility, and confidence as we move beyond the small mind of ego and open to the vast mind of nowness. With courage, we move beyond the cocoon of habitual patterns that entrap us. With courage, we emblazon our hearts with the fire of compassion and devotion. With courage, we fully trust the present moment leaping into the unknown. Transcendent courage is unwavering certainty and power. I commit to courageously face fears so they dawn as fearlessness.

Meditation (Skt. *Dhyana*) - Mindfulness, Concentration, Absorption, Attention, Awareness, Contemplation, Reflection, Intention, Prayer, Enaction

Meditation is the virtue that produces realization. Like a horse whisperer calming down a bucking stallion, we befriend and tame the wild and untrained mind. Like a completely calm and clear alpine lake, the original mind reflects what is as it is. True meditation is self-possession and returning to our true home. Training one's attention to be both one-pointed and expansive, we get to know the present moment in detail, in vastness, and in joining the two. Meditation transforms the discursive mind and embodies the dharma in our life by turning away from mind states that further ensnare us in samsara and purposefully directing the mind to the dharma. With a loving and inexhaustible curiosity, meditative self-knowledge is developed by mindfully exploring our body, speech, mind, and their interaction with the world. With concentration, our mind becomes disciplined and our understanding becomes refined. With prayer and enaction, we direct the body, speech, and mind towards our intentions and aspirations. With awareness, we turn the light of awareness upon the mind's nature liberating discursiveness. Transcendent meditation is unceasing. I commit to tame and investigate the mind training it to recognize and relax in its own nature.

Equanimity (Skt. *Upeksha*) - Peace, Calm, Tranquility, Serenity, Balance, Equipose, Impartial, Neutral, Non-Violence

Equanimity is the virtue that produces self-possession. Like walking on a tightrope, small adjustments are all that is needed to keep balance. Undisturbed by thoughts, emotions, and appearances, like a mountain, equanimity remains steady in the midst of the storm knowing all that arises will dissolve back again. True equanimity is finding peace in the midst of the vicissitudes and transience of life. In the solidness of being, equanimity allows all there is to be seen, felt, and embodied. In the groundless present moment, we enjoy the display. With serenity, we cease fighting reality. With balance, we move towards the feelings of centeredness and impartiality. With one-taste, we transcend the eight worldly concerns: hope for pleasure and fear of pain, hope for praise and fear of blame, hope for fame and fear of disgrace/insignificance, hope for gain and fear of loss. Radiant and blissful, transcendent equanimity is absolute. I commit to cultivate equipose and develop one-taste toward all phenomena whether good or bad, happy or sad until they vanish like the imprint of a bird in the sky.

Renunciation (Skt. *Naishkarmya*) - Turning Away, Relinquish, Non-Attachment, Release, Let Go, Abandon, Surrender, Vow, Commitment

Renunciation is the virtue that produces simplicity. Like waking up with dread and regret from our actions from the night before, we are revulsed by ourselves vowing to not repeat our actions. Like sitting in the early morning enraptured by the dawn chorus of birds, there is pure enjoyment. True renunciation is joining truth and peace. Releasing attachment and identification with personal territory, privacy, property, clan, homeland, trade, and life itself we dedicate ourselves wholeheartedly to studying and practicing the dharma. Not engaging in drama and letting go of the need to control, we transcend distractions and everyday concerns. With renunciation, we remove the influence and conditioning, whatever its source, that entraps the mind. With renunciation, we become one-pointed in our endeavor. With renunciation, we remove the barrier between oneself and others. Transcendent renunciation is accomplishment. I commit to turn away from the trap of samsara and turn towards being available for the whole world.

Skillful Means (Skt. *Upaya-kaushalya*) - Action, Method, Technique, Means, Skill, Expedience, Quality, Creativity, Humor

Skillful means is the virtue that produces connection. Like having lost our mind in a complete freakout, with a compassionate slap to the face we are brought back to reality. Like a well placed humourous distraction, we make a potentially violent mood peaceful. Like spectacles, we correct our vision. Like the invention of the wheel, we go long distances more easily. True skillful means is the expression of bodhichitta and the joining of responsibility and freedom. Without the need to be literal, definitive, or orthodox, we can be the most reverent. Without the need to throw off tradition, reject authority, or dive into unbridled passion, we can be the most irreverent. With attunement, knowledge, and embodying the five elements, we manifest what is needed. With creativity and devotion, we develop momentary expressions of the dharma. With patience and love, we insult the ego. Transcendent skillful means is play itself. I commit to reach the result with the means of skill and compassion.

Wisdom (Skt. *Prajna*) - Intelligence, Insight, Discriminating Awareness, Knowledge, Understanding, Intuition, Spontaneous Knowing, Awareness

Wisdom is the intelligence that cures the disease of basic ignorance. Like polishing brass, we remove the accumulation that dulls the natural mirror-like quality of the mind. Like an all-victorious general with a bird-like view of the field and deep understanding of the terrain, their troops, and the enemy, wisdom commands the virtues. True wisdom is uncovering what is already there. Worldly wisdom is the intelligence of the illusion. Through the three prajnas of hearing, contemplating, and meditating, we refine and sharpen dependent wisdom: knowing reality as impermanent, interdependent, and egoless. In direct and unmediated experience, original wisdom clearly reflects all as it is. Resting in the intelligence of the five wisdoms, we reach the result. With wisdom of accommodation, we rest in the pure emptiness nature (Buddha). With mirror-like wisdom, we rest knowing clearly and spontaneously the nature of all appearances (Vajra). With discernment wisdom, we rest knowing all phenomena as distinct and in essence (Padma). With wisdom of equanimity, we rest in one-taste towards all phenomena (Ratna). With wisdom of accomplishing, we rest in spontaneously accomplishing all enlightened actions (Karma). Transcendent wisdom is unborn. I will rest in the non-dual coemergent nature of mind so wisdom is primordially present.