



ROLE OF PĀRAMITĀ IN THE 21ST CENTURY FOR A PEACEFUL SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT :

The twenty-first century is the century of science; humans can conquer the galaxy and explore the ends of the universe. People can easily create material wealth, information technology, and modern machines, but the problem of how to regulate the rhythm of life between people and between one community and another, between one country and another, is a difficult one. Society is like a living organism. When it develops physically, it also develops mentally. Likewise, when material development thrives, it creates inevitable conflicts for society in all aspects of politics, ethics, economics, science, etc., with the purpose of reforming, building, and developing society to become better. Therefore, the role of Pāramitā in the 21st century for a peaceful society is truly considered a practice method to build a peaceful, happy world, a world of truth, goodness, and beauty in today's society.

Keywords: Pāramitā, Peaceful, 21st century, Mahāyāna, Generosity, Morality, Patience, Effort, Concentration, Wisdom.

INTRODUCTION :

Buddhism emerges in the midst of this life with the goal of solving the suffering and pain of all living beings through a path of spiritual development and practice to gain insight into the true nature of the real. The Buddha appears to be also for the sake and happiness of mankind. He attained enlightenment and taught the profound teachings (Dhamma), exposing the true nature of things and removing the clouds of ignorance and darkness. He explained the Four Noble Truths¹, which are the truths of life. In the forty-five years of his spread, he declared, “*Bhikkhus, both formerly and now, what I teach is suffering and the cessation of suffering*”².

Also, *Pāramitā* is one of the methods of practice that was taught by the Buddha to all. The Buddha said, “All living beings can become Buddhas,” and *Pāramitā* is considered the path to the Bodhisattva's Buddhahood. According to the *Theravāda* tradition, there are ten *Pāramitā*, but in the *Mahāyāna* tradition, there are six *Pāramitā*. Here we will analyze six *Pāramitā*. *Pāramitā*'s practice is towards a peaceful and prosperous life, and beyond that is enlightenment.

In the 21st century, people living in high technology certainly will be influenced and affected by material life. The desire to achieve many things and don't know when it is enough, the struggle for small things to greatness, the quarrels of an individual, a group, or a country, and gradually leading to war these are from where? The people are scrambling forever, with no escape. For man has forgotten the virtues of a human being that the Buddha taught very clearly in the *Pāramitā*: generosity, morality, patience, effort, one-pointed concentration, and wisdom. If we apply them to our present lives, we can solve the problems of suffering and achieve real happiness. “*A man may conquer a million men in battle, but one who conquers himself is, indeed, the greatest of conquerors*”³.

For a peaceful society in the 21st century, human ethical elements are essential between man and man. The appearance of the Buddha's teachings deeply influenced humanity. The virtuous actions of the Buddha have made people wake up to the birth and death of this life; he came up with a cure for humanity. Thus, the Buddha gave many means and methods and depends on the disease to be treated. Therefore, *Pāramitā* is considered the moral virtue for each individual, for the practice of the Bodhisattva virtue, and the establishment of an ideal society.

¹ *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, tr. by Bhikkhu Bodhi. Boston, USA: Wisdom Publications, 2000, p. 1847.

² *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, original tr. by Bhikkhu Nanamoli, tr. ed. and revised by Bhikkhu Bodhi. Boston, USA: Wisdom Publications, 2009, p. 234

³ *The Dhammapada: Verses and Stories*, tr. by Daw Mya Tin, M.A. Varanasi, India: Central University of Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, 2014, p. 258.

DEFINITION OF PĀRAMITĀ

Pāramitā (Sanskrit) or *pāramī* (Pāli) means “perfection” or “completeness.” The term *pāramitā* was combined from two etymologies. The first derives from the word *parama*, meaning “highest,” “most distant,” “chief,” “primary,” and “most excellent.”

A more creative yet widely reported etymology divides *Pāramitā* into *pāra* and *mita*, with *pāra* meaning “beyond” or “the further bank, shore, or boundary” and *mita* meaning “which has arrived” or “that which goes.” *Pāramitā* means “that which has gone beyond.” This reading is reflected in the Tibetan translation *pha rol tu phyin pa*, “gone to the other side”⁴.

Pāramitā is a practical experience of Buddhism, and also the vows of the Bodhisattva have vowed to establish morality and wisdom in social life and guide the beings to come to enlightenment, or rather, the path leading to the Bodhisattva⁵ to engage to save sentient beings. *Pāramitā* will help develop the spirit and lifestyle that lead people and society to achieve perfection.

According to *Theravāda* Buddhism, it practices “Ten Perfections,” namely: 1. Generosity (*Dāna*), 2. Morality (*Sīla*), 3. Renunciation (*Nekkhamma*), 4. Transcendental wisdom (*Paññā*), 5. effort or energy (*Viriya*), 6. Patience (*Khanti*), 7. Truthfulness (*Sacca*), 8. Determination (*Adhiṭṭhāna*), 9. Loving-kindness (*Mettā*), 10. Equanimity (*Upekkhā*).

In *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*⁶, the Lotus Sutra⁷, and a large number of other texts list the six perfections: 1. Generosity (*Dāna*), 2. Morality (*Sīla*), 3. Patience (*Kṣānti*), 4. effort or energy (*Viriya*), 5. one-pointed concentration (*Dhyāna*), 6. wisdom or insight (*Prajñā*).

Pāramitā is the virtue that is cultivated to consolidate the practice. Perfection describes the true nature of an awakened being, i.e., our true nature, which is obscured by the afflictions of illusion, hatred, greed, and fear.

PĀRAMITĀ IN PRACTICING MEDITATION TO ATTAIN PURIFICATION OF THE MIND

Meditation is the fifth part of Pāramitā. Knowing that things are always changing because of their nature is impermanent. Impermanence is not fixed. Every change is continuous, but we were stubborn and refused their change. If we recognize this and accept it as natural, life will become peaceful. Though we are living in a world that expects building and keeping forever and ever, humans have to suffer.

Therefore, every morning when someone wakes up, works, eats, or bathes, all activities are as smooth as everyone else, but the mind is always calm and peaceful. Each of us has an awareness that it helps us live in a customary way without losing ourselves or being disturbed, which leads to creating bad karma in the present.

In today’s society, meditation is very popular in the world. Almost all Western countries are also gradually moving towards meditation, especially Vipassana meditation. Today, meditation schools are established and developed in some countries, such as Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, India, and so on. The formation of these meditation schools is for the sole purpose of developing human spirituality and creating an ideal society, which is mentioned in the context of the *Pāramitā* of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. Each of us must meet two conditions: material and spiritual. Once we have enough material to feed ourselves, we cannot escape the suffering of defilements and the strain of life because we are always lacking in spirituality. Therefore, meditation is the way to gain wisdom, have the power to transform an individual’s suffering and help create an ideal society. In the 21st century, Vipassana Meditation is considered a way to relieve stress. This method can apply to all classes, such as celebrities, teachers, psychologists, students, peasants, farmers, workers, and so on. It is also possible to practice when stressed at work.

Practicing meditation and achieving good results, such as:

- Senses are tranquil,
- Achieving compassion and loving sentient beings.
- There is no defilement, anger, or delusion.
- Not be shaken by form, sound, smell, taste, or touch.
- Staying in bliss is one of the most delicious foods in the world.
- There is no longer a craving for sensual love.
- Opening all the ties of suffering
- Wisdom opens and resides in the realm of the Buddhas.
- Achieving maturity where all karma is no longer turbulent.

PĀRAMITĀ FOR PRACTICING NON-VIOLENCE

All religions have orientations and views on different ideas, but the purpose of the Buddha’s teachings is to guide human morality to perfection and to build a good society. It is imperative that each religion break contradictory agreements and resolve conflicts in a common direction of concern for peace. From the past to the present, the world has repeatedly experienced violent warfare, terrorism, racism, and religious violence. The issue of creating peace for the world is very important. But there is still no way to find a satisfactory solution unless countries around the globe change their political and cultural paths to apply nonviolent morality to society.

⁴ Lopez, Donald S. Jr. (1988). *The Heart Sutra Explained: Indian and Tibetan Commentaries*, p. 22–24

⁵ P. Pathak, *Early Buddhism and Indian Thoughts*, MD Publication Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, P. 229

⁶ Williams, Paul. *Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, 2nd edition. Routledge, 2009, p. 47

⁷ Chapter numbers of the extant Sanskrit version are given here. The arrangement and numbering of chapters in Kumarajiva’s translation are different.

Buddhism is considered a nonviolent religion, contributing a lot to world peace. In particular, *Pārāmīta* is the path that the Buddha has coined for all sentient beings toward truth, kindness, and beauty for each individual and society in general. For thousands of years, this philosophy has always been valued with compassion and wisdom, establishing a system of human moral values and avoiding violence through the precepts that the Buddha preached in *Vinaya*. Morality is the second part of *Pārāmīta*.

The precepts, which are considered the most moral basis for perfecting a person because of their morality, lead to orderliness and equality. Equality leads to satisfaction, and when satisfaction is achieved, one will attain happiness, joy, and peace of mind and gradually step away from the sins that arise intellectually. These are the benefits of preserving the precepts. A society or a nation also, if, without the rule of law, there is no social order, that country will be full of theft, murder, adultery, society's vices, and so on.

Besides, generosity and patience in *Pārāmīta* are acts of the wise man who knows how to operate and perceive deeply in life. Generosity, as an act of love, comes to humanity with a genuine heart, which is in contrast to violence. On the other hand, patience and tolerance in this case mean accepting the difficulties, hardships, and suffering of our own existence and accepting to find clarity and calmness. Using violence to respond to violence only adds to the suffering for all and does not solve anything. So patience will help to remove nonviolent behavior and wars that bring peace to humanity.

IMPACT OF PĀRAMITĀ IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PEACEFUL LIFE :

The role of religions in assisting and protecting world peace has attracted not only the attention of politicians but also of all those who are concerned about the security of the world. Buddhism holds that all personal or social conflicts arise from three poisons in the mind: greed, hatred, and delusion. Violence and war are just the external manifestations of these kinds of defilements. Conflicts between an individual or a community often arise from desire, fame, and economic and political power. From this perspective, *Pārāmīta* mentioned that to resolve conflicts and wars in the individual and social spheres, human beings need to transform their karma through meditation. In Dhammapada No. 223, “*Overcome the angry by non-anger; overcome the wicked by goodness; overcome the miser by generosity; overcome the liar by truth*”⁸.

The Mahāyāna tradition has always promoted the bodhisattva ideal with the practice of the six *Pārāmīta*. Without wisdom, the remaining five people, five blind people, are wandering on the path of the unknown. As we all know, one of the causes of war whereas human greed is without stopping and unaware of the value of life. If we understand this, people will not kill each other. In *Cūlakammavibhanga Sutta-Majjhima Nikayā*, the Buddha preached: “*Beings are owners of their actions, heirs of their actions; they originate from their actions, are bound to their actions, and have their actions as their refuge. It is action that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior*”⁹.

Peace is the eternal aspiration of mankind. National leaders always face many acts of violence and hostile forces. If they are cultivated and equipped with qualities of compassion and wisdom, not only can they find effective ways to deal with conflicts, violence, or war, but even they don't have to contain the heavy pressure from external effects.

The Buddhist principle of peace is also formed based on the precepts that *Pārāmīta* mentioned. Buddhist precepts encourage practitioners to stay away from violence and war. No killing is considered a paramount precept in all Buddhist traditions. The Five Precepts of Buddhism for lay followers are the principles that guide us towards peace, liberation, and enlightenment. The Five Precepts have the power to protect themselves, their family, society, nation, and country. These are the most precious gifts we can give to our loved ones and contribute to the creation of peace for mankind.

Some conditions lead to the degradation of society, such as the following :

- Individualism, selfish, pragmatic, opportunistic, self-seeking; only to collect individual, not interested in collective interests; jealousy; not wanting anything other than yourself.
- Collective; causing internal discord; united downstream, formal democracy; local, sectarian, contest, domineering, patriarch, lack of democracy in the direction and administration.
- Ostentatious, concealed defects, and hyped-up achievements like to be praised.
- State officials, away from the masses, not sure about the local situation, agencies, and units; irresponsible to the difficulties of the people.
- Embezzlement, corruption, and abuse of positions and powers to tolerate, cover, or support corruption negatively.
- Gambling, alcoholism, superstition, supporting or participating in illegal religious organizations, and falling into society's vices.
- -Moral things should come from the body, speech, and mind:
- About the body: 1) protect the life of all species; 2) enforce generosity; 3) sense of sex life; and not cause suffering.
- About Speech: 1) speak the truth; 2) speak reconciliation; 3) create friendliness and harmony; 4) speak softly; and 5) recite the scriptures.
- About Mind: 1) rejoice with the happiness of others; 2) have compassion and love for people; 3) maintain the right views.

CONCLUSION :

Pārāmīta is considered the moral virtue of the individual, the practice of the Bodhisattva virtue, and the establishment of an ideal society. *Pārāmīta* is available in us, but we are unaware of it; we do not cultivate and look after it when eating, working, walking, or standing, through words or in quiet moments.

⁸ *The Dhammapada: Verses and Stories*, tr. by Daw Mya Tin, M.A. Varanasi, India: Central University of Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, 2014, p. 76.

⁹ *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, original tr. by Bhikkhu Nanamoli, tr. ed. and revised by Bhikkhu Bodhi. Boston, USA: Wisdom Publications, 2009, p. 1053.

For a peaceful society in the 21st century, human morality is essential. The appearance of the Buddha's teachings deeply influenced mankind. He has found the cure for humanity. Therefore, the Buddha has given a great number of means, methods, and disciplines to heal the beings depending on their disease.

What are people born to do, and what will they bring after dying? But why do human beings forever scramble, not stop? Because men have forgotten the virtues of a human being that the Buddha taught very clearly in *Pāramitā*: generosity, morality, patience, effort, one-pointed concentration, and wisdom. If we and our family practice successfully, the energy of peace, harmony, and happiness in the family will have a very positive effect on society. Because a person is part of society, to build a strong and peaceful society, the first human morality must be built through education. As a foundation of that value, people are empowered to help themselves and their society.

Therefore, in this modern 21st century, in addition to material, technology, and digital, people should cultivate morality through *Pāramitā*, which is seen as the path to welfare, peace, non-violence, and the end of human suffering. Not only in modern times but forever after, *Pāramitā* will help humanity see the real value in every human being if we know how to apply it in life. So to establish a good society, it is necessary to perfect each individual. If mankind has perfected itself, it will surely lead to a peaceful society.

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