

# Summary and Key Points of 10th Lesson on Cultivating the Bodhisattva Way

## Summary

This document is a transcript of a Dhamma talk given by **Brother Teoh Kian Koon** on 10 March 2019, as part of a series on cultivating the Bodhisattva path. The teaching covers **karmic obstructions**, the importance of **asking for forgiveness**, the **10 perfections**, the distinction between the **law of attraction** and the **law of karma**, and an introduction to **Abhidhamma concepts** such as *cetasika* (mental factors).

Brother Teoh begins by emphasizing the importance of **clearing karmic obstructions** through sincere requests for forgiveness from the Triple Gem and all beings, and through invoking the power of merits. He explains that these practices are essential for progressing on the Bodhisattva path without being hindered by past negative karma.

The talk then explores the **10 perfections** (*pāramitās*) that Bodhisattvas cultivate: generosity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, spiritual zeal, patience, truthfulness, determination, loving-kindness, and equanimity.

A significant portion is devoted to contrasting the **law of attraction** (popular motivational theory) with the **law of karma**. Brother Teoh explains that while positive thinking may have temporary benefits, it does not account for karmic consequences. True success and well-being come from **taking care of karma** – avoiding evil, cultivating wholesomeness, and purifying the mind.

The teaching also introduces the concept of **cetasika** (mental factors) from the Abhidhamma, explaining that these are simply the mental states that arise in consciousness. He lists the 52 mental factors, including the 7 universals, 6 occasional, 14 unwholesome, and 25 wholesome factors. He emphasizes that these are not mere theory but are to be directly observed through stable mindfulness.

Brother Teoh then guides practitioners through the **10 steps of the Avijjā Sutta** enlightenment sequence, showing how initial wisdom (*yonisomanasikāra*) leads to stable mindfulness, sense restraint, and eventually awakening.

The session includes **meditation reports** from students:

- **Brother Song** shares his experiences of bright inner light, spacious awareness, and deep understanding of the Dharma.
- **Sister Soo** shares her pilgrimage experience, noting a conditioned calmness and lingering aversion to beggars, and her realization that she must look inward.

Brother Teoh concludes by introducing the **Three-Fold Lotus Sutra** (法华三部经), which consists of:

1. *Sutra of Infinite Meanings* (无量义经)
2. *Wonderful Dharma Lotus Sutra* (妙法莲华经)
3. *Samantabhadra Meditation Sutra* (观普贤菩萨行法经)

He notes that these texts represent the next phase of study for the group.

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## Key Points

### 1. Clearing Karmic Obstructions

- **Karmic obstructions** can be very powerful and hinder cultivation.
- To clear them:
  1. **Ask for forgiveness** from the Triple Gem and all beings for past wrongs (knowingly or unknowingly).
  2. **Vow not to repeat** these negativities by following the Buddha's advice: avoid all evil, do good, purify the mind.
  3. **Invoke the power of merits** to create causes and conditions for amicable resolution.

### 2. The 10 Perfections (*Pāramitās*)

1. **Dāna** – generosity
2. **Sīla** – morality
3. **Nekkhamma** – renunciation
4. **Paññā** – wisdom
5. **Viriya** – spiritual zeal
6. **Khanti** – patience/endurance
7. **Sacca** – truthfulness
8. **Adhiṭṭhāna** – determination, aspiration, affirmation
9. **Mettā** – loving-kindness
10. **Upekkhā** – equanimity

### 3. Law of Attraction vs. Law of Karma

Law of Attraction	Law of Karma
Positive thoughts attract positive outcomes	Actions (karma) determine outcomes
Motivational, thought-based	Rooted in nature's law
Does not account for karmic consequences	You reap what you sow
Temporary benefits; can deplete merit	Long-term; requires ethical conduct
May involve evil roots without awareness	Requires avoiding evil, cultivating good, purifying mind

- **Key insight:** 心想事成 (wishing for things to come true) only works when supported by understanding of karma and appropriate conditions.

#### 4. Cetasika (Mental Factors)

- **Cetasika** = mental states, mental concomitants, content of consciousness.
- There are **52 mental factors**:
  - **7 universals** (present in all consciousness): contact, feeling, perception, mental intention, one-pointedness, life faculty, attention.
  - **6 occasional** (Jhanic/enlightenment factors): initial application (vitakka), sustained thought (vicara), interest (**adhimokkha**), zeal (viriya), joy (Sukha), passion (Chanda).
  - **14 unwholesome**: delusion, shamelessness, moral fearlessness, restlessness, greed, wrong view, conceit, hatred, envy, stinginess, worry, remorse, sloth/torpor, doubt.
  - **25 wholesome/beautiful**: faith, mindfulness, moral shame, moral fear, non-greed, non-hatred, equanimity, tranquillity, lightness, pliancy, adaptability, proficiency, rectitude, right speech, right action, right livelihood, compassion, sympathetic joy, wisdom, etc.
- These are not mere theory – they are to be **observed directly** through stable mindfulness.

## 5. The Ten Steps of Enlightenment (from Avijjā Sutta)

1. Association with Dharma friends (*kalyāṇamitta*)
2. Listening to the true Dhamma
3. Developing faith (*saddhā*)
4. Developing initial wisdom (*yonisomanasikāra*) – through 1st and 2nd turnings of Four Noble Truths
5. Mindfulness with clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*)
6. Sense restraint (*indriyasamvara*)
7. Three ways of right conduct (right action, speech, thought)
8. Cultivation of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*)
9. Development of the Seven Factors of Enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*)
10. Enlightenment in the here and now

## 6. Yonisomanasikāra (Wise Attention)

- Wisdom at the moment of sense experience.
- When present, feeling remains as pure feeling and **does not condition craving**.
- This stops the 12 links of dependent origination at the feeling link.
- It leads to more moments of peace, calmness, and stable mindfulness.

## 7. Adhiṭṭhāna (Determination)

- **Adhiṭṭhāna** = spiritual determination, affirmation, resolution.
- It involves invoking the **power of truth** or **power of merits** to fulfill wholesome aspirations.
- Examples: the *Aṅgulimāla Sutta* and *Jaya Maṅgala Sutta* use such affirmations.
- Unlike the law of attraction, adhiṭṭhāna is rooted in understanding of karma and spiritual laws.

## 8. Practical Guidance from Brother Song's Experience

- **Bright inner light** is a conditioned mind state – one of the **ten defilements of insight**. Do not cling to it.
- **Spacious awareness without a center** arises when mindfulness stabilizes.

- **Understanding of the Dharma** unfolds like a flower blooming when the mind is ready.
- With stable mindfulness, one can see **subtle mental intentions** and the **three evil roots** clearly.
- When wisdom arises, **one no longer acts from memory** but from understanding.

### 9. Sister Soo's Pilgrimage Experience

- Her calmness was a **conditioned state** born of determination and faith, not a free mind in *sati*.
- **Aversion to beggars** revealed that understanding and right view were not yet fully developed.
- Her insight – *"I must reverse the light and look inward"* – is the beginning of true cultivation.
- True cultivation begins by **seeing one's own defilements**, then understanding others.

### 10. Understanding Aversion and Fear

- **Fear attracts aggressors** (dogs, thieves, beggars) because they can sense it.
- With wisdom and calm awareness, one can respond appropriately without fear.
- **Mettā** must be already present in the mind; it cannot be summoned in the moment of crisis.
- Reflection and contemplation help straighten views and overcome habitual reactions.

### 11. The Three-Fold Lotus Sutra (*Fa Hua San Bu Jing*)

- **First book:** *Sutra of Infinite Meanings* (无量义经) – introduction to the Lotus Sutra; covers virtue, Dharma teaching, and ten merits.
- **Second book:** *Wonderful Dharma Lotus Sutra* (妙法莲华经) – 28 chapters; includes parables (burning carts), predictions of Buddhahood, and deep teachings.
- **Third book:** *Samantabhadra Meditation Sutra* (观普贤菩萨行法经) – meditation practices of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva.
- These texts represent the **next phase of study** for the group.

### 12. Dharma is a Living Understanding

- Dharma is not mere theory or knowledge – it is a **living understanding** that must be integrated into life.
- It **stands up to investigation** and is not rigid.
- Cultivation happens **in the midst of life**, not apart from it.