

Chapter 15

The Six Ways of Attaining Reverent Harmony

For Buddhist monks (or nuns) who would like to practice together, the Buddha also offers concrete precepts that are found in the *Contemplation Sutra*. These precepts provide guidelines that facilitate the maintenance of harmony within Buddhist communities consisting of three or more people.

The “six harmonious ways”¹ are:

1. reverent harmony in living together;
2. reverent harmony in maintaining no verbal criticism;
3. reverent harmony in sharing happiness from practising the teachings;
4. reverent harmony in observing the precepts;
5. reverent harmony in doctrinal unity in views and explanations;
6. reverent harmony in sharing benefits.

1. Reverent Harmony in Living Together

This precept fosters a harmonious environment for cultivation and elevates the sense of unity amongst practitioners during the process of learning. Establishing institutional unity prevents monasteries from being treated as places for anyone wanting to escape from the world.

¹ 六和敬: 1. 身和同住; 2. 口和無諍; 3. 意和同悅; 4. 戒和同修; 5. 見和同解; 6. 利和同均.

2. Reverent Harmony in Maintaining No Verbal Criticism

There shall be no disputes amongst practitioners who are truly putting effort into tending the path. The most common behaviour would be gossiping when people gather together, which easily produces evil karma in form of oral activity.

3. Reverent Harmony in Sharing Happiness from Practicing the Teachings

This is the so-called joy that is produced by dharmas. No matter which Buddhist school we enter, we will receive the most basic achievement - joy. If learning Buddhism does not bring us happiness, then something about our cultivating methods must be amiss. We need to identify the problem and address it.

4. Reverent Harmony in Observing the Precepts

When we share the same roof during cultivation, we must have commonly accepted precepts and rules. There would be chaos without rules. These rules must apply equally to everyone. These rules should include the five fundamental precepts made by the Buddha.

5. Reverent Harmony in Doctrinal Unity in Views and Explanations

Undoubtedly, our shared goal of cultivation is to attain enlightenment. Here it means that we attain enlightenment by studying under the guidance of the same school. In Chapter 20, we will discuss various Buddhist schools. To reach enlightenment, disciples of different schools cannot progress in their cultivation in the same place.

6. Reverent Harmony in Sharing Benefits

We can achieve this harmony only when we equally distribute our benefits. Everyone must ensure equal treatment in every respect. It is very necessary and important to avoid the three poisons of craving, aversion, and ignorance in this area.