

## Chapter 14

### The Three Disciplines

In learning Buddhism, we ought to bear in mind the important concept of the three disciplines: precepts, determination, and wisdom<sup>1</sup>. These are three significant aspects of Buddhism. In Sanskrit, they are referred to as *tripiṭaka*. Looking at the three aspects is a brilliant way to analyze Buddhism. The three disciplines are necessary for Buddhist beginners.

1. **Precepts:** These are also referred to as the set of rules and disciplines. Understanding precepts is very important. When one enters a foreign country, one has to comply with its laws and regulations to exempt from fear. It is said that one needs to inquire about local regulations upon entering a new territory. Only when one remains concentrated, could one be able to see through things and make wise judgements. Chapter 6 has mentioned the “five precepts” in Buddhism.
2. **Determination:** it refers to a kind of mind state, which is usually acquired through meditative practice. Chapter 11 has explained what “meditative concentration” is.
3. **Wisdom:** This has always been there. One will gain wisdom once one eliminates craving, aversion, and ignorance. Wisdom differs from the intelligence of mastering scientific

---

<sup>1</sup> 戒, 定, 慧.

knowledge or facility in earning money. The “faculty of wisdom” is the foundation of wisdom, which has nothing to do with fighting for power and money.

### **Simultaneously Cultivating the Three Disciplines**

For readers who would like to take Buddhist learning seriously, I suggest them peruse and recite at least one Buddhist sutra, such as the *Sutra on the Eight Kinds of Attentiveness of Great Persons* or the *Heart Sutra* with merely 260 words. The common goal for studying any Buddhist sutra is to restore the “intrinsic nature”. Chanting a sutra could facilitate the three Buddhist practices of precepts, determination, and wisdom.

The Buddhist says: “If one is able to observe precepts and keep the rules, then his heart will be stable, peaceful, and free from disturbances. One’s object of pursuit will be determined by maintaining an unperturbed calmness in one’s mind. Precepts are therefore very important in cultivation. If one commits crimes, one’s conscience will be roused even when the government does not impose any punishment. One will not be able to cultivate determination without a calm mind. To cultivate determination, one has to have mental serenity. It is thus said that “Determination is resulted from observing precepts and wisdom grows out of determination.”

What is the very first step of serious Buddhist learning? One suggestion is that we begin from chanting a sutra. While “precepts” require us not to do anything evil, “sutras” are written in words uttered through the intrinsic nature of the Buddha. Nothing is more charming than these words. Hence,

chanting sutras are doing good things. While chanting a sutra, we need to concentrate on one point, which is the cultivation of determination. Reading every word clearly without omission is the cultivation of wisdom. If you have a hectic work schedule, you may consider reciting the *Sutra on the Eight Kinds of Attentiveness of Great Persons* or the *Heart Sutra* printed in Chapter 7.