

Ten Paramitas in the Mahayana

The ten perfections (*paramitas*) of a bodhisattva

Compiled by George Draffan 2026

PERFECTION	DEFINITIONS and CLASSIFICATIONS	ENEMIES
Sanskrit: paramita Tibetan: pha rol tu chin pa	based on Gampopa	Far enemies are opposite qualities. Near enemies appear to be similar but are incomplete, clouded by confusion or impure motives.
Generosity, giving Skt: dana Tib: jinpa	Definition: giving fully without attachment. Classification: (a) giving wealth; (b) giving fearlessness; (c) giving Dharma.	Far enemy: Selfishness, stinginess, grasping. Near enemies: Giving with expectation of reward, thanks, or recognition.
Discipline, ethical behavior Skt: shila Tib: tsultrim	Definition: pure motivation, mindfulness and respect; behavioral guidelines or precepts maintained and renewed. Classification: (a) restraint; (b) accumulating virtue; (c) benefitting sentient beings.	Far enemy: Undisciplined, harmful behavior. Near enemies: Restraint motivated by fear of disapproval. Following the letter but not the spirit. Harsh self-punishing discipline.
Patience, tolerance, forbearance, endurance Skt: shanti Tib: zopa	Definition: a feeling of ease accompanied by compassion. Classification: (a) patience dealing with those who bring obstacles; (b) patience in accepting hardships; (c) patience in understanding Dharma and accepting emptiness.	Far enemy: Impatience, anger, intolerance. Near enemies: Patience for mundane things but not for spiritual practice. Calculating patience that seeks revenge later. Harsh suppression.
Energy, diligence, enthusiasm, effort, determination, perseverance Skt: virya Tib: tsondru	Definition: taking joy in virtue. Classification: (a) armor-like perseverance until the end of samsara for all beings; (b) applied perseverance to avoid kleshas, accomplish virtue, and benefit beings; (c) insatiable perseverance in virtue until reaching enlightenment.	Far enemy: Laziness, disregard, discouragement. Near enemies: "Busy" laziness so occupied with mundane activities there's no time for spiritual practice. Occasional bursts of energy rather than sustained determination. Extreme efforts with harsh motives rather than love and joy.

<p>Meditation, meditative stability Skt: dhyana Tib: samten</p>	<p>Definition: calm abiding one-pointedly on virtue. Classification: (a) abiding bliss free of discursive thoughts; (b) accumulating good qualities; (c) benefitting sentient beings.</p>	<p>Far enemy: An untrained mind running on confusion and reactivity. Near enemies: Dull indifference mistaken as tranquillity. Thinking mistaken for direct knowing.</p>
<p>Wisdom, understanding, discriminating awareness, discernment Skt: prajna Tib: sherab</p>	<p>Definition: discriminating awareness. Classification: (a) mundane wisdom: medicine, reasoning, language, and arts; (b) lesser supramundane wisdom: hearing, reflection, and meditation realizing the three marks: impermanence, selflessness, and suffering; (c) greater supramundane wisdom: hearing, reflection, and meditation realizing the emptiness of all phenomena.</p>	<p>Far enemy: Ignorance or delusion about the nature of phenomena. Near enemies: Mere knowledge and conceptual grasp without direct knowing.</p>
<p>Skilful means, method Skt: upaya kausala Tib: tap la khepa</p>	<p>Skillful methods for actualizing the teachings and ripening beings to attain liberation and enlightenment.</p>	
<p>Aspiration, vow, determination Skt: pranidhana Tib: monlam</p>	<p>Dedication to never be parted from performing far-reaching activities to benefit all beings.</p>	
<p>Strength; power Skt: bala Tib: top</p>	<p>Spiritual strength and power encompassing supernatural abilities, stability, and wisdom.</p>	
<p>Primordial, timeless, nondual awareness Skt: jnana Tib: yeshe</p>	<p>Fully integrated wisdom simultaneously and nonconceptually realizing relative and ultimate truth in the phenomenal world.</p>	